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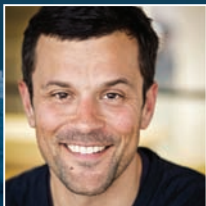
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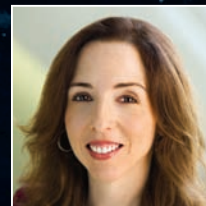
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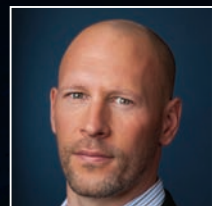
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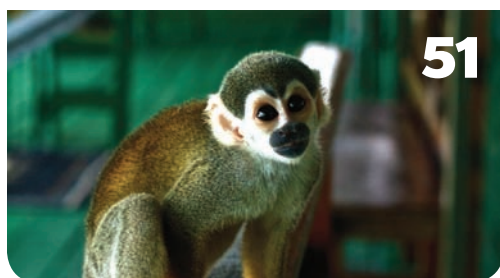
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## ....PLUS C'EST LA MÊME CHOSE

**H**ello, it's me. Very good to see all of you again, and I hope everyone has had a lovely summer.

You may recall that last time around on this page, I announced my departure from the post of editor and content director for *realscreen* via a heartfelt and hopefully not too schmaltzy editorial. Within it, I trotted out the old chestnut about change being the only constant, and that my next phase – moving into stay-at-home dad mode, with my wife returning to work – was simply part and parcel of that truth.

Well, sometime after deadline for that issue, change reared its head once again and in the process, dropped off a positive home pregnancy test on our bathroom counter for good measure.

Thus, the time came for a re-evaluation of my choice, which was, in truth, dictated by circumstance and not an inner desire to change course, and efforts got underway to adapt to this new reality. Thankfully, my superiors here at *realscreen* and Brunico Communications were more than willing to arrive at an arrangement that would allow me to continue my work with the brand – albeit at a reduced schedule until the new year, when Bundle No. 2 is set to arrive – with minimal disruption to the processes we have in place and the plans we have underway. As we gear up to launch our first event in the UK – the sold-out Realscreen London – I'm absolutely thrilled that I've been able to keep my hand, and perhaps a couple of other limbs, in. A big thanks to Claire for helping chart that course.

The whole team at *realscreen* also had to adapt to this new arrangement, and I'm extremely grateful for its efforts in doing so. With Adam Benzine recently upped to online editor in addition to his associate editor role for the print publication, and with our editorial team doing us proud with its extensive coverage at TIFF (see page 13 for a sampling) and, just ahead, MIPCOM, it's great to feel that we are firing on all cylinders, and then some.

Adaptation is, of course, central to survival. As we are seeing in the UK production sector, new realities concerning consolidation – particularly regarding foreign ownership – are leaving many to wonder how creativity will be impacted. How will policy be adapted to reflect the changes that are reconfiguring the production landscape? And how will producers adapt to those potential changes? Just in time for Realscreen London, we examine those questions on page 19.

Adaptation is a central component as well of one of the main drivers of television today – the formats industry. But there's a danger, when adapting content for international audiences, that the "secret sauce" that makes a format work can be diluted. What's the fine line between hitting the right tone for your market with a format, and changing it completely? That's discussed on page 68.

Indeed, change and adapting to it are two of the key lessons we learn in life, both personally and professionally. And while the twists, turns, curveballs and roller coaster rides can make for a few headaches and the odd sleepless night... Well, at least they keep things interesting.

Cheers,  
Barry Walsh  
Editor and content director  
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## Back in the saddle

**T**he last installment of my ramblings on all things *realscreen* bid a heartfelt goodbye to Barry Walsh, our esteemed editor and content director. So you might have been surprised to see his column appear just two pages back. For those who haven't read his editorial, I'll fill you in: in mid-July, we announced the restructuring of our editorial team which allows Barry to stay on in his role, and the promotion of Adam Benzine from associate editor to associate editor and online editor.

Barry will be working on a reduced schedule until early 2015, when he will return in a full-time capacity. He continues to oversee all content, including the curating of content for Realscreen London and the 2015 edition of the Realscreen Summit, along with conference producer Tiffany Rushton.

In his expanded role, Adam now has oversight of Realscreen Daily and a broader role in further developing realscreen.com as the unscripted and factual industry's primary source for up-to-the-minute news and insight.

On the sales side, Lisa Faktor has been promoted to senior account manager and Chris Vin, who comes to us via the event sales department, has joined the team as account manager. Both report to associate publisher Melissa Giddens.

With our reworked and expanded teams in place we're ready to welcome more than 400 delegates to the inaugural edition of Realscreen London. Just five months ago, after consultation with a good number of international executives, we concluded that London should be the next stop for the *realscreen* roadshow, with a specific view to strengthening the emerging partnership paradigm between UK and international producers and global buyers, by providing a forum for networking, learning and deal-making.

The event sold out two months ago, so it would appear that we came to the right conclusion. I regret having to turn potential delegates away, and a search is underway to secure a larger venue for the 2015 edition. Sincere thanks to the advisory board, which was behind this idea from the outset, and provided invaluable guidance putting the program together. The board consisted of: **Sean Cohan**, EVP, international, A + E Networks; **Jonathan Hewes**, head of international, Wall to Wall; **Daniel Korn**, SVP and head of programming, Discovery Networks Western Europe; **David Lyle**; **Laura Marshall**, managing director, Icon Films; **Jane Millichip**, managing director, Sky Vision; **Jane Root**, CEO, Nutopia; **Rob Sharenow**, EVP and GM, Lifetime; **John Smithson**, creative director, Arrow Media; and **Ellen Windemuth**, CEO, Off the Fence.

Plans are now underway for the 17th Realscreen Summit, set for DC from Tuesday, January 27 to Friday, January 30. Meet the advisory board on pg. 5.

And finally, Realscreen West returns to the Fairmont Miramar June 1-3, 2015. Yes, you read that right. We're expanding to a three-day program to facilitate even more business getting done. Watch this space for details as they unfold.

'Til next time, go well  
Claire Macdonald  
VP & Publisher  
*realscreen*

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As the keynote speaker for this year's Doc Conference at the Toronto International Film Festival, director Michael Moore offered a 13-point manifesto for non-fiction filmmakers. *Realscreen* was on hand to take notes.

BY MANORI RAVINDRAN



Don't call him a documentarian: Michael Moore offers his filmmaking manifesto at TIFF.

# MOORE'S MANIFESTO

**M**ichael Moore may be a lot of things, but one thing he – quite adamantly – is not, is a documentarian, he told delegates during his keynote at the Toronto International Film Festival's sixth annual Doc Conference in September.

"We are not documentarians, we are filmmakers," said the *Roger & Me* director, dressed casually in a black T-shirt and shorts and sporting his signature baseball cap. "This word, 'documentarian'? I am here today to declare that word dead. That word is never to be used again.

"People love going to the movies. The audience doesn't want to be lectured, they want to be entertained. And that's the big dirty word of documentary filmmaking," he said.

In the hour-long keynote, Moore said that more documentaries need to be made for theaters, rather than television, and that these films need to do more to entertain audiences rather than lecture them.

Moore, citing a conversation with Sony Pictures Classics head Michael Barker, says documentary makers are having more difficulty securing theatrical distribution for films today because audiences have stopped going to theaters to see documentaries they believe they can just as easily watch at home.

The director said he considered himself part of the problem, since the commercial success of his documentaries such as *Bowling for Columbine* and *Fahrenheit 9/11* convinced distributors to put more docs in theaters, and ultimately opened the floodgates for a number of television-oriented docs being shown on the big screen.

"The audience that got used to seeing the theatrical documentaries from [Morgan] Spurlock and even Al Gore, they came out of the theater going, 'Well, that was a good documentary, but I could have seen that at home on television. Why did I pay \$12 for that?'"

Moore said that in order to get people to revisit theaters for docs, filmmakers need to make more cinematic, accessible work.

The director spent the latter half of his keynote outlining a 13-point manifesto for filmmakers:

## 1 Don't make a doc, make a movie.

"The art is more important than the politics," said Moore. "Because if I make a [bad] movie, my politics won't get through to anybody. The art has to come first."

## 2 Don't tell me anything I already know.

"Give people something new they haven't seen before," said Moore. "With *Roger & Me* I said there shouldn't be one shot of an unemployment line. People are numb to those images."

## 3 Don't let your documentary resemble a college lecture.

"We have to invent a different kind of model than the college lecture model," said Moore.

## 4 Too many of your documentaries feel like medicine.

"Don't show a doc that's going to kill [an audience's] evening," said Moore.

## 5 The Left is boring.

"It's why we have a hard time convincing people to think about some of the things we're concerned about," said Moore. "The Left has lost its sense of humor and we need to be less worried."

## 6 Why don't we name names?

"Why don't we go after the corporations and name them by name?" asked Moore. "You will be sued. People will be mad at you. But so what?"

## 7 Make your films personal.

"People want to hear your voice," said Moore. "It's what most docs stay away from, and most don't like narration. But who's 'saying' this film?"

## 8 Point your camera at the cameras.

Moore said doc makers should challenge the mainstream media by filming its coverage of events.

## 9 Follow the examples of non-fiction books and television.

"People love to watch [Jon] Stewart and [Stephen] Colbert," he said. "Why don't you try to make films that come from the same spirit? People just want the truth and they want to be entertained."

## 10 Film only the people who disagree with you.

The director said that while filming *Roger & Me* he tried to stay away from interviewing union workers to tell the story, since they were basically friends. Interviews with those who held contradictory opinions are harder to secure, but more interesting to audiences, said Moore.

## 11 Make sure you're getting emotional when filming.

"Are you getting mad when filming a scene? Are you crying?" asked Moore. "That's evidence that the audience will respond that way, too... [You] are a stand-in for the audience."

## 12 Less is more.

"Edit, and make it shorter," Moore advised, saying it's okay to let audiences fill in the gaps. "People love that you trust they have a brain."

## 13 Sound is more important than picture.

"Sound carries the story," said Moore. "Don't cheat on the sound, and don't be cheap with the sound."

Moore closed his session by saying he wanted more non-fiction films to be seen by millions of people and that "it's a crime that they aren't."

"For a long time I blamed the distributors, the studios and the financiers, and really, we should just take a few moments to blame ourselves as filmmakers," he said.



# Greenlit & Gone

A look at what's on the way from assorted networks, and what's on the way out.

## **Lachey's Bar**

Produced by: Leftfield Pictures  
Network: A&E

## **Hotel Showdown**

Produced by: Loud TV  
Network: Travel Channel

## **CeeLo Green's The Good Life**

Produced by: Emerald TV Productions, Rogue Atlas  
Network: TBS



## **Top Chef Canada**

Produced by: Insight Productions  
Network: Food Network (Canada)

## POINTED ARROW: A Producer's Perspective

BY JOHN SMITHSON

I don't know if those lazy weeks in Mediterranean hotspots lulled us all into a state of benign complacency, but now that everything is back in full swing, some people are looking at the new broadcast landscape and they are not liking what they see.

Leading the charge is Channel 4 chief executive David Abraham, who used his keynote speech at the Edinburgh TV festival to rail against American media corporations for creating a gold rush, as they buy up the crown jewels of British television.

He envisaged a time when half the UK indie community was in American hands. His fear – what this gold rush would do to the creativity that has been at the heart of this incredible success story, which has created a US\$5 billion business.

Do companies lose their identity and creative drive when sucked into a corporate megalith? Does the large amount of cash sedate the creative genius at the helm?

First, a declaration of interest. At Edinburgh it was announced that our indie, Arrow Media, had agreed to a minority investment from the Channel 4 Growth Fund to act as a catalyst to our creative ambition. It is purely an arms-length commercial deal that preserves our indie status.

Having previously run a company owned by two big players with mega corporate backing, IMG and then Endemol, I've got plenty of perspective on the arguments Abraham raised.

Yes, in our superindie phase we had to hit financial targets, but how we did that was our responsibility. Who we worked for and on what projects was our choice. So, creativity did not suffer.

Surveying many fellow indies who have also sold, it's clear that their creative juices are still flowing. Most of their new owners seem keen to nurture their distinctive identities and culture rather than just suck them into the corporate mothership.

So I think, in the short term, the creativity and independent spark of the UK sector is unscathed. And forgive the surge of patriotic sentiment, but what a remarkable period it has been for British indies. There is a greater investment in

homegrown content per head in the UK than in the U.S. or any of the major European countries, and we have two buoyant public sector broadcasters in C4 and the BBC that respectively take 95% and 40% of their peak time output from indies. Robust terms of trade negotiated by our trade association Pact have enabled us to keep and exploit our IP.

But as we move into the next phase of relentless consolidation, what will it be like when the superindies all start to merge and a large chunk of production and broadcasting is in the hands of a few giant groups?

Here it gets tough for the indies that have been acquired to retain their unique creative culture. There are plenty of tell-tale signs: being moved into corporate HQ, losing the company name and identity and having whole new layers of creative and financial accountability, often from a long way away. It's here, in this death spiral of identity loss, that the fears about erosion of creativity have real validity.

One thing gives me hope – the relentless creativity of a new generation of talent, with big ideas and even bigger aspirations to grow their own indies. You've got to believe that the spark of creativity will never be extinguished, but reignited by the next wave.

But in the meantime, back to work. How kind of *realscreen* to create an event in London just ahead of MIPCOM, to help us be Cannes-ready.

I look forward to interviewing, in the opening session, Brent Montgomery, the man behind the astonishing rise of Leftfield Entertainment. He has engineered a reverse gold rush. A key player in U.S. unscripted television, swallowed – at a handsome price – by a British network, ITV. But here too, the wheel may turn again. How long will ITV remain a British company before it also gets engulfed in the gold rush?

*John Smithson is creative director of Arrow Media, an indie he co-founded in 2011. Previously he was chief executive at Darlow Smithson Productions.*







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## SCRIPPS NETWORKS INTERNATIONAL LAUNCHES DISTRIBUTION ARM

**S**cripps Networks International is launching an in-house global sales and distribution arm, to be headed by Hud Woodlee.

The HGTV, Food Network and Travel Channel operator is launching the division with a 1,200-hour slate at MIPCOM in Cannes.

Woodlee, who has previously led international development and sales, becomes VP of international program licensing and distribution. He will be based in New York and report to international chief financial officer Simone Nardi.

In the role, he will oversee program sales and content distribution to third-party nets outside the United States and work with regional managers in London, Singapore and São Paulo to devise sales strategies for the company's library. He is in the process of building sales teams in New York, London, Singapore and Sydney.

In a statement, Nardi said an in-house operation will enable Scripps to "more closely coordinate our international and regional channel and programming priorities" as the company expands abroad.

"[Woodlee's] past experiences of helping establish our channel business across Asia-Pacific and maximizing international program sales opportunities make him uniquely positioned to lead this new effort," he added.

Scripps' channel portfolio includes HGTV, DIY Network, Food Network, Cooking Channel, Fine Living, Asian Food Channel, Travel Channel and Great American Country.

Passion Distribution, which has represented Scripps Networks' catalog titles since 2010, will continue its exclusive arrangement with Scripps for the next six months and introduce Scripps' titles on its upcoming MIPCOM slate. Passion will then continue to represent some Scripps titles until September 2016. **Kevin Ritchie**



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### HOW TO START A SUCCESSFUL DAY

BY CHRIS PALMER AND JAZMIN GARCIA

Achieving success at work is an outcome of being physically, mentally, and emotionally vibrant, and having the energy, focus, and competence to provide the value which justifies your compensation. Here are six tips to help you start the work day ready to succeed:

**EXERCISE:** Start the day with exercise to wake up your body and mind. If you are short on time, a simple stretching routine can provide you with a gentle and effective transition from rest to motion. If you can't start the day with exercise, make time for it sometime during the day. Avoid a heavy exercise routine just before bed because it can keep you awake.

**EAT A NUTRITIOUS BREAKFAST:** Don't grab a doughnut and coffee as you rush out the door. If you skip breakfast due to a lack of time, have healthy food ready to go – for example, fruit, oatmeal, yogurt, or a low-sugar, high-fiber cereal. The idea is to have the time to sit and enjoy your breakfast, so set your alarm a few minutes earlier and make breakfast a daily habit. Make sure to grab your water bottle as you head out the door. Staying hydrated during the day is important.

**SLEEP WELL AND ENOUGH:** A successful workday is filled with creativity, problem-solving, and energy. That does not come easily without a proper amount of sleep. Make sure you have a favorable environment for a good night's rest. Turn off your cell phone, tablet, computer, and other electronics. Give yourself a cut-off time of at least 20 minutes before bedtime from social websites and Internet surfing. This downtime will tell your brain that it is time to rest and make it easier for you to fall asleep. A lot of us will quickly sacrifice sleep to finish a project or to catch up on our favorite TV series, but this can lead to inappropriate yawning, irritability, and lack of focus the next day.

**GET ORGANIZED:** It is surprising how many of us wake up with barely enough time to shower, dress, and run out the door. To make the morning routine easier, have your outfit ready, prepare your gym bag, backpack, or purse the night before. The fewer stressors we encounter in our morning rush, the easier it will be to focus on work.

**USE A TO-DO LIST:** Most of us have a to-do list to get us through our workday. A to-do list helps you organize, prioritize, and complete your tasks. Before leaving at the end of a workday, create your to-do list for the following day. That way, you can hit the ground running the next morning.

**BE POSITIVE:** If you had a bad day on the job, try not to bring those negative feelings to the following day's work. Look on each day as a new start and don't taint it with yesterday's unfavorable occurrences. If there is a problem at work, deal with it as soon as possible to avoid harboring negative feelings which can affect both your home life and your performance at work.

No matter how many healthy breakfasts you eat or how much you organize for the next day, you can't succeed at work if you don't look forward to what you do. Not everyone holds their dream job, but it's important to greet each day with a can-do and constructive attitude.

*Professor Chris Palmer is the founding director of American University's Center for Environmental Filmmaking and author of the Sierra Club book Shooting in the Wild: An Insider's Account of Making Movies in the Animal Kingdom. Jazmin Garcia is a filmmaker and MA candidate at American University. •*

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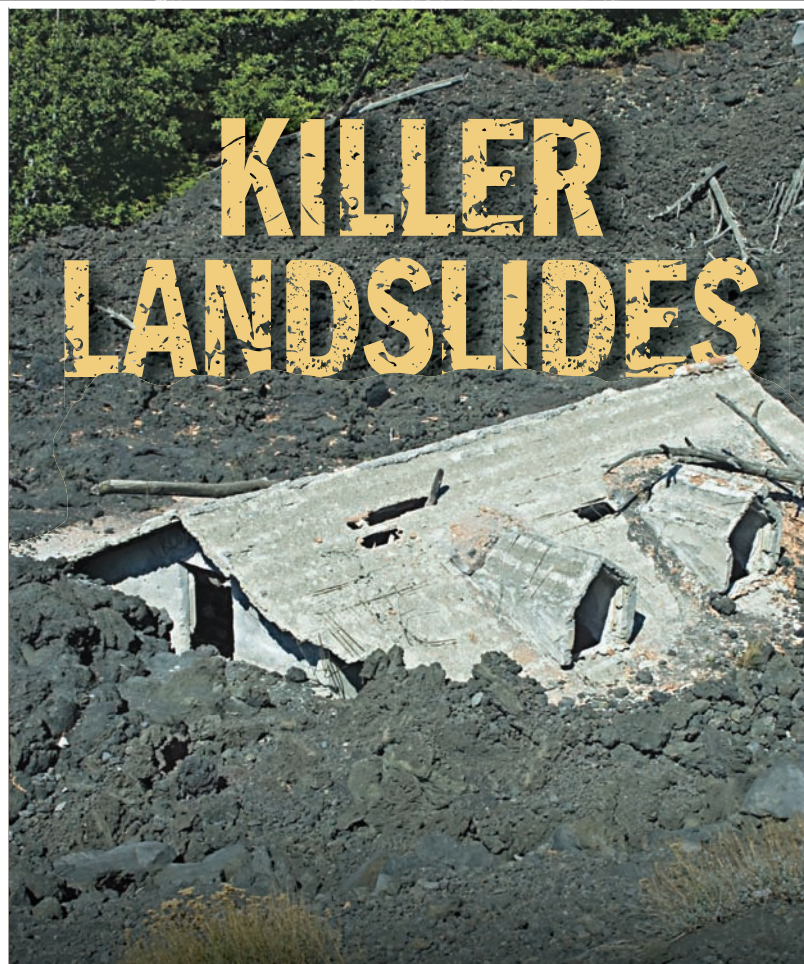
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# KILLER LANDSLIDES





With the BBC's Tony Hall proposing "a competition revolution," change is afoot in the UK.

# Terms of negotiation

BY ADAM BENZINE

With the UK production sector caught in a whirlpool of mergers and acquisitions, the BBC is proposing tearing down its existing system of commissioning quotas to accommodate a rapidly changing landscape. *Realscreen* examines what the consequences could be for indie producers.

**A**fter several years in which a string of mergers and acquisitions have rapidly altered the shape of the UK production sector, BBC director-general Tony Hall stunned indies in July by proposing "a competition revolution" that would radically alter the way that the public service broadcaster does business with producers.

Presently, a quarter of the BBC's TV productions comes from independent companies, while 50% is produced in-house. The remaining 25% is available to both, via what is known as the Window of Creative Competition (WoCC).

This quota system has allowed British indies to flourish and – coupled with the UK's Terms of Trade, which mandates that prodcos should own the IP that they create – has made them ripe targets for investment and takeovers.

But now, Hall says, the WoCC has become inadequate and needs tearing down. The quotas system needs abolishing, and in-house division BBC Productions needs freeing up to allow it to pitch to other broadcasters.

"Under the current rules, some big, global producers no longer count as fully independent, so their shows can't go in the 25% of BBC television airtime guaranteed to independent producers," Hall told attendees at London's City University in July.

"So a big, long-running, independently-produced series like *MasterChef* has had to

move into the 25% window of creative competition that's open to everyone. That squeezes out creativity and innovation. Big returning strands... now take up space designed for new ideas. A system set up to encourage competition and choice has begun to forcibly

**"A system set up to encourage competition has begun to forcibly corral producers."**

corral producers into three separate tribes."

Thus far, Hall's proposed changes have been welcomed by the Producers Alliance for Cinema and Television (Pact), which represents UK indies. Pact CEO John McVay offers cautious praise, but says the industry must ensure that the proposals aren't just "smoke and mirrors."

"We've long called on the BBC Trust and the





Abraham

## "2014 could go down as the peak year of the Gold Rush of British Television."

all, all they care is that it's good quality, and good value for money from their investment in the BBC," he adds. "Clearly there are big questions about how you move from the current system into a more open commissioning world from the BBC, and also have BBC Productions still existing within that."

The BBC's proposal – which will need to be approved by governing body the BBC Trust – comes during an exciting and rapidly changing time for the UK independent sector.

In his MacTaggart lecture at the Edinburgh International Television Festival in August, Channel 4 CEO David Abraham remarked

that 2014 "could go down as the peak year of the Gold Rush of British Television."

It would be hard to disagree with him. Since the start of the year, UK-related M&A activity has included superindie Tinopolis Group buying *Fashion Star* firm Magical Elves; Discovery Communications acquiring Raw TV; Argonon acquiring *Monster Moves* prodco Windfall Films; ITV Studios buying Leftfield Entertainment; Discovery Communications and Liberty Global nabbing superindie All3Media; U.S. giant Viacom taking over UK broadcaster Channel 5; Sky buying a 70% stake in *Benefits Street* indie Love Productions; a massive three-way merger between Endemol, Shine Group and Core Media; and Channel 4 buying into UK indies for the first time, acquiring minority stakes in Arrow Media, Lightbox, Popkorn and True North.

For Argonon Group CEO James Burstall, consolidation is no bad thing. With the acquisition of Windfall, his firm now has 12 indies under its umbrella. Ultimately, he says, it is the quality of an idea that shines

BBC to consider the purpose of its in-house guarantee," McVay says, "particularly as the market – the non-BBC program suppliers – have, over the past five years, won more share out of the WoCC, to the point where it's now about 48% more BBC programs that are made by non-BBC companies.

"License fee payers – and we've done some considerable research on this – they don't care who makes the program at

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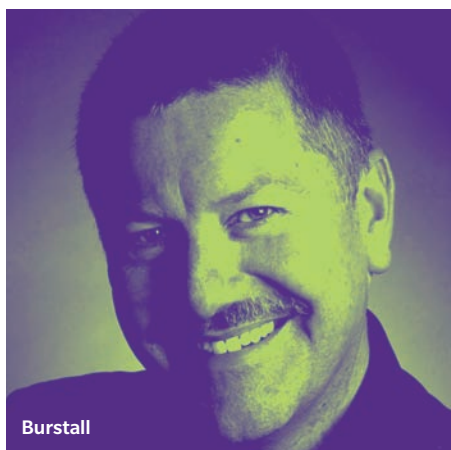
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Burstall

**“Having scale does give you an advantage, but unless your ideas are outstanding, they will not get through.”**

through, rather than the fiscal clout or size of the prodco.

“Having scale does give you an advantage, particularly internationally, but at the end of the day, unless your ideas are really outstanding, they will not get through,” he says. “We don’t see that there is any problem with small minnow companies versus giant colossi – it is an even playing field when it comes down to the best idea winning. We are all competing to be the most original and the most inventive.”

Burstall also rejects the suggestion that having broadcasters such as Sky, Discovery, ITV and Channel 4 buy stakes in indies could lead to conflicts of interest at the commissioning stage. He offers Discovery’s deal to take control of *Jungle Gold* producer Raw TV as an example.

“They’ve bought Raw TV because they obviously want Raw to make lots of great shows for them, which they obviously will,” he offers. “But Raw can never deliver a packed schedule for multiple networks in the Discovery family all over the world – no one company can ever do that. So in my view there’s room for everybody.”

Another firm that has sold a stake to a broadcaster is Love Productions, which was founded in 2004 and had been an indie for a decade prior to its July deal. Richard McKerrow, Love’s creative director, says the allure of a sale to BSkyB was more than just financial.

“We reached a place where we figured that we had a really strong brand,” he explains. “We had one of the biggest shows on the BBC [*The Great British Bake Off*], one of the biggest shows on Channel 4 [*Benefits Street*], and felt that we would benefit from bigger support from a bigger company that might



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be able to take us to the next level.

“What was attractive about the Sky proposition was that it had never bought anyone in the UK before, and we like to see ourselves as a pioneering company that breaks new ground,” he adds. “Whereas with ITV, we would have just felt like another cog in the wheel – it has bought so many companies. What we like to do is head into uncharted terrain.”

With changing ownership structures, however, come changes in attitude, and not all are as welcoming of the new indie landscape of 2014. In his MacTaggart keynote, Abraham expressed concern about the strength of the UK’s creative industries, as British companies move into foreign hands.

“Our free-to-air channels have become the must-have accessories, the tiny dogs of 2014, amongst U.S. media companies eager to stay ahead of each other by internationalizing their revenues, priming their distribution pipes and shielding their tax exposure,” he told Edinburgh delegates.

“So, Channel 5 now takes its orders from Viacom in New York. Liberty and other U.S. shareholders are trying to play footsie with ITV; which could eventually put Britain’s largest commercial channel

in the hands of Dr. John Malone, resident of Colorado and who also now controls the UK’s pay-cable platform Virgin Media; our largest producer, All3; and Discovery.”

McVay dismisses Abraham’s warning out of hand, calling it “illogical” on account of the fact that C4 itself now has a financial stake in the future of several UK indies. “Americans – and indeed non-American companies – have long been buying up British companies and investing in successful British businesses,” he says.

“Coming out with a certain jingoistic, anti-American or anti-investment platform is damaging to the UK economy and sends out

that’s the way C4 gets its money back and more?” he adds. “It doesn’t seem to me to be a very coherent position.”

Either way, the shifting landscape of media company ownership shows no sign of slowing down. And whether ultimate majority control of the UK indie sector ends up being in British or American hands, it seems certain that we will see more takeover activity before the year is out.

Talking to *realscreen* in March, Thomas Dey, president and CEO of advisory firm About Corporate Finance, forecast that the M&A whirlpool would move up a notch and envelop several of the

larger consolidators; a prediction that preceded the huge deals involving All3Media, Endemol and Shine Group several months later.

As such, if the BBC is successful in scrapping its existing quota system, it will be interesting to see which newly acquired indies end up being the winners and losers in the resulting free-for-all. After all, the prize at stake is

some £400 million (US\$652.57 million) worth of commissioning opportunities. ●

**“What was attractive about the Sky proposition was it had never bought anyone in the UK.”**



the wrong message, instead of celebrating the fact that we are one of the world’s most successful broadcasting businesses. Surely C4 would like to see some of the companies that it has now invested in sell themselves for huge multiples to other people, because

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The American version of the long-running UK hit *Top Gear* airs on History.

Now more than ever, UK producers are finding homes on American television for their unscripted formats. But a few U.S. producers are starting to make inroads across the pond with adaptations of their series. What do producers from both territories need to know about how to make their content connect with new markets?

BY MANORI RAVINDRAN

# Culture Clash?

**W**hen chef Gordon Ramsay came to America for the U.S. adaptation of *Kitchen Nightmares*, he started shouting a little louder than he did in the UK. It's not that American audiences weren't listening – the series ran for seven seasons Stateside, after all, only ending this past summer – it's that they expected a bigger performance.

Ramsay's showmanship – and lung capacity – have made him one of the best known UK imports, but the variations between the American and British series reflect what is quickly becoming apparent to U.S. and UK producers looking to cross over into each other's territories: more than an ocean separates these markets when it comes to reality programming, and if a show is to succeed, it must cater to specific cultural sensibilities and find its place within a larger context.

"The Brits and Americans are so similar in so many ways, and so culturally different

in how they view television programming, that it's a slippery slope," says Brent Montgomery, CEO of Leftfield Entertainment, one of the few U.S. production companies to have exported a show – *Pawn Stars* – to the UK. "In general, British audiences have a stronger appetite to let content breathe and be less in your face."

*Pawn Stars UK* kicked off its second season on History in the UK in September, but it's the exception to a trend that sees more shows crossing over from the UK to the U.S. than the other way around.

It's not that U.S. formats aren't strong enough to travel overseas, but rather that U.S. producers aren't as incentivized to sell abroad because, unlike their UK counterparts who can exploit their IP via the Terms of Trade agreement, most of them don't legally own the formats. Plus, the sheer size of the U.S. TV market makes having rights to a hit series more valuable within the country than outside of it.

But that hasn't stopped American

producers from looking elsewhere for a hit format to adapt, and the last decade has seen iconic shows such as *Dancing with the Stars*, *What Not to Wear* and, of course, *American Idol* originating from UK formats.

Eli Holzman is president of All3Media America, and his team recently debuted *The People's Couch* on NBCU cable net Bravo in the U.S. – an adaptation of the Channel 4/Studio Lambert-produced smash *Gogglebox*, in which people are filmed watching television in their homes.

"I was very skeptical about the show in general and skeptical that it would work anywhere – including the U.S. – but that was only until I'd seen a bit of the footage and then thought, 'Wow, it's amazing,'" admits Holzman.

But *The People's Couch* needed some reupholstering before it had a chance of working in the United States.

Showrunner Aliyah Silverstein points out that Americans respond to "bigger laughs delivered more frequently" and a faster pace, meaning that while the UK show





All3Media America's *The People's Couch*, the U.S. adaptation of the Channel 4 hit *Gogglebox*, airs on Bravo.

spends about seven minutes on each featured program, the U.S. version only allots roughly four minutes. In addition, British producers use voice-over to advance the plot, while Silverstein's team relies on editing and the household's commentary to move their show along.

But despite the alterations, Holzman says it's imperative to maintain the spirit of an import.

"It's always important to understand what the key ingredients are that are making a format work and then to be vigilant and make sure they're preserved," says Holzman. "What *Gogglebox* does so perfectly – and what we knew we needed to capture – was that you really feel like you're in the living room of these households. For both series the point is you're trying to capture this communal viewing experience."

He admits that the risks of pitching such an unusual show were tempered by its UK success.

"What is so great about imports is that you don't even know there's an American taste for them until you see it be a hit someplace else, and then there's the opportunity to take the chance with a U.S. programmer," explains Holzman. "Something like *Dancing with the Stars* we may never have seen on American television had it not been a hit overseas. American programmers never would have taken that risk."

But why are the Brits – and not Americans – the ones taking those risks? Holzman points out that charters for broadcasters such as Channel 4 and the BBC mandate experimentation in programming. As

a result, UK broadcasters are quicker to commission new ideas from paper, creating the optimal landscape for hatching new formats.

"[U.S. nets] prefer to license rights to pre-existing foreign shows where they see a ratings track record and tape of the episodes themselves," he says.

One such UK show is the BBC's popular driving series *Top Gear*, which made its way to the U.S. in 2006 as a pilot for NBC. Though the broadcaster didn't pick up the U.S. adaptation, it eventually found its way to History in 2010.

Jane Tranter, head of BBC Worldwide Productions, was integral in bringing *Top Gear* to America and calls herself a "human bridge across the Atlantic."

She describes her job as taking a British piece, understanding its concept and how it works, and finding the right people in the U.S. who can translate it to an American audience without "wimping out on all the reasons it was successful in the UK in the first place."

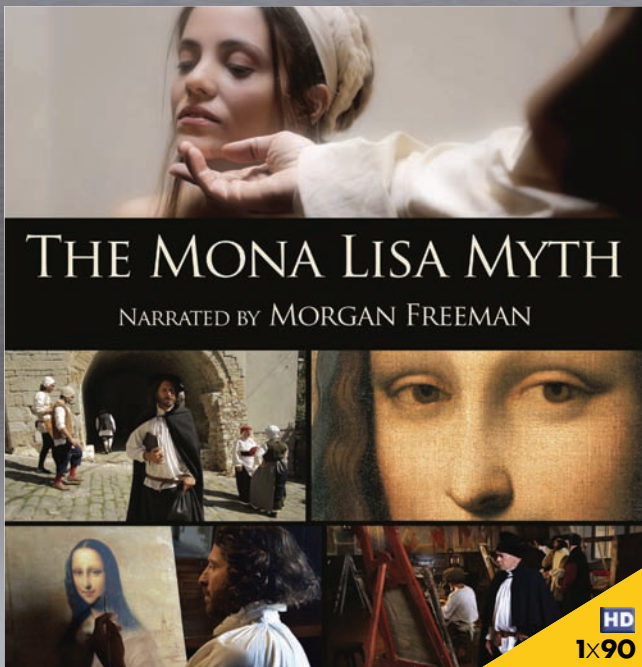
But the exec warns that context is paramount in negotiating a home for a foreign show. "What is zeitgeist-y and current in the UK isn't necessarily what's zeitgeist-y and current in the U.S., so you have to be very culturally aware to ensure your piece is landing in a place where people are going to be interested," says Tranter.

**"British audiences have a stronger appetite to let content breathe and be less in your face."**





## The Best in Factual Entertainment







**“You have to be very culturally aware to ensure your piece is landing in a place where people are going to be interested.”**

The exec says there also needs to be a good reason for crossing over, and it must always fill a void in the reality landscape. Tranter provides the example of *The X Factor*, which has had vastly different experiences in the U.S. and UK.

“By the time *X Factor* launched in the U.S.,” she says, “the audience already had *Idol* and they already had *The Voice* coming up, snapping at its heels.”

But despite the pitfalls of crossing over, with joint ventures and multinational indies increasingly connecting the U.S. to the UK, a predominantly one-way trajectory of content from the UK to the U.S. could be changing in the future.

Tom Forman, CEO of U.S. prodco Relativity Television, believes such changes should be a serious objective among American producers.

The exec is developing a U.S. adaptation for WE tv of Channel 4’s social experiment series *Sex Box*, in which couples have sex in a soundproof box and then discuss their experience afterwards.

“We’re always thinking about the show first, then our U.S. broadcast and cable partners, and we’re also thinking how that show will sell in the international market and having to design something we can sell overseas both as tape and format,” says Forman.

In a similar fashion, Montgomery says launching *Pawn Stars UK* was part of Leftfield’s goal to become a larger global player – an objective that led to a US\$360 million deal with ITV in May, in which the UK broadcaster acquired 80% of the prodco.

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Leftfield Pictures brought its smash hit for History, *Pawn Stars*, across the pond to the UK. (Pictured: the U.S. cast)

the American-sold tape but rather through their own territory's format," says Montgomery.

"We figured the more we're in those types of conversations on a daily basis with a giant, successful British company, that will give us a better shot than most in figuring out the delicate balance of what works in another territory and what works here, if applied properly," he adds.

Over in the UK, some producers are also beginning to feel a palpable attachment with the U.S.

Nick Bullen, managing director of *Love Your Garden* producers Spun Gold, says that though the two cultures will always have marked differences, their respective producing styles are beginning to converge.

"So many of the U.S. shows play here that I think it's beginning to feed itself into the UK market," says Bullen.

"The UK is beginning to look at its reality and how it can up the scripted levels to deliver high-octane performances every single time, rather than just hoping they'll transpire," he adds.

The question for some, however, is whether the British market should resemble its American counterpart.

Deals such as Discovery Communications and Liberty Global's

purchase of UK superindie All3Media, and 21st Century Fox and Apollo Global Management's intended Shine-Endemol merger have led to the foreign ownership of a significant chunk of UK content suppliers – moves that are throwing the IP rights held by UK indies into question.

Now more than ever, there is a greater demand among UK broadcasters such as Channel 4 for access to those program rights – a move, some U.S. execs say, that would be detrimental to the creative landscape in the UK.

"By mimicking their U.S. counterparts and demanding worldwide rights from the British producers," cautions Holzman, "the UK networks run the grave risk of disincentivizing the very entrepreneurial producers who have done such a brilliant job exporting British television all over the world and creating its value in the first place." •

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With 2012's *The Act of Killing*, Joshua Oppenheimer created one of the most controversial and talked-about documentaries in decades. Two years later, he talks to *realscreen* about navigating "a minefield of clichés" to make the follow-up, *The Look of Silence*.

## OPPENHEIMER'S SECOND ACT

BY ADAM BENZINE

**W**hen *realscreen* interviewed Joshua Oppenheimer in September 2012 about his hopes for *The Act of Killing*, a documentary premiering at the Toronto International Film Festival with substantial buzz around it, the American director had modest aims.

Oppenheimer hoped the Indonesia-set film would "open a space for a radical reimagining of the country's present." Few could have predicted the effect the film would have.

Two years later, *Killing* has become one of the most talked-about documentaries of the past 25 years. In addition to an Oscar nomination and awards from more than 60 festivals and critics groups, it has also achieved the filmmaker's desire of opening up a discussion in Indonesia about the mass murders of 1965-66, which left at least half a million so-called communists dead. And though the Indonesian government condemned the film, the fact that it was forced to comment at all is a testament to the conversation the film has provoked.

Now, Oppenheimer has returned with a companion piece to *Killing*, entitled *The Look of Silence*. Where the first film – in what the director is billing as a diptych – focused on the perpetrators of the genocide, controversially challenging them to recreate their war crimes in the style of their favorite

Hollywood movies, *Silence* instead takes a softer approach, shadowing a survivor named Adi as he looks for answers, confronting the men who killed his brother nearly 50 years ago.

"This is a less flamboyant film," Oppenheimer tells *realscreen*, talking by phone from Denmark, "but it is as lyrical as the director's cut of *The Act of Killing* – maybe more so."

The director began working on both films more than a decade ago, in a bid to understand the massacres of the mid-1960s. Shortly after starting the process, however, the director says members of the Indonesian army started threatening the survivors that he was attempting to interview, ordering them not to participate in the filming. It was at this point that he changed tack and instead started filming the perpetrators, leading to 2012's *Killing*.

As such, *Silence* is "in a way, the film that I set out to make when I first started working on 1965 and working with the survivors of the genocide," Oppenheimer explains. "I began my work in Indonesia trying to make a film about what it's like for the survivors to live with the perpetrators all around them still in power."

As he went about filming self-professed mass murderers boasting about their deeds for *Killing*, the director says he showed this

material to survivors, who urged him to press on with the project.

"They said, 'You must continue filming the perpetrators, because anyone who sees the way they're speaking and hears the way they're behaving will see what's wrong with Indonesia today,'" he explains. "They'll see that there's this moral vacuum that becomes inevitable when killers win."

"But I always felt there was this other film, equally contemporary, that demanded to be made, which is a film about how the survivors live and build a life in the shadow of these still powerful, still threatening perpetrators. About what it would be like to live in one of those haunted, silent spaces that punctuate *The Act of Killing*."

While *Killing* won widespread acclaim, it did not win universal praise. Among the minority of vocal detractors were critics Jill Godmilow and Jennifer Merin, who both wrote lengthy critiques of the film; and BBC 'Storyville' editor Nick Fraser, who took to *The Observer* to pen a 1,153-word takedown of the doc, under the headline "Don't give an Oscar to this snuff movie."

The core complaint among those opposing *Killing* was that it glorified and gave voice to the perpetrators of the Indonesian killings, without affording the victims a platform to have their say.

Oppenheimer defends that he always planned





*The Look of Silence* won five awards, including the Grand Jury Prize, at this year's Venice Film Festival.

to make two docs with opposing focal points, and says that it was clear from the early stages of editing *Killing* that the survivors would need their own, dedicated film.

"It would be reckless to put survivors in the same film as [perpetrator] Anwar Congo and his friends, because they would become easy targets for the wrath of the entire paramilitary and military establishment in Indonesia," he says. "It could mean death for them."

Even now, with the release of *Silence*, Oppenheimer says he has taken great lengths to protect Adi and his family from repercussions, helping to relocate them to a different part of Indonesia.

"We're quite certain that the danger they face is from local power brokers, so we're confident that having moved them to a place where there's a whole network of supportive people around them, we're quite sure that they're safe," he explains. "But the situation is not without worry."

There is also another reason for two separate films, the director explains. With *Killing*, "those audience members who are willing to go there will, at some moment, feel some form of empathy with Anwar as a human being, and recognize that we're all closer to perpetrators than we'd like to think."

"And that would have been much more difficult to achieve if there had been survivors in the film because the moment you cut to the survivors, the audience immediately disinvests from the perpetrators and clings to the survivors

emotionally. It would undermine the whole premise of the movie, which is to explore how perpetrators are human."

Off the back of the buzz that *Killing* generated, *Silence* looks set to be one of the key feature documentaries of 2015. After premiering at Venice in late August, where it won five awards – including the fest's Grand Jury Prize – it continued its festival run at Telluride, before playing TIFF and the New York Film Festival in September, winning rave reviews across the board.

Drafthouse Films, which distributed *Killing* in the U.S. and took it to the Academy Awards, has returned to distribute *Silence*, this time teaming up with Participant Media, and the pair will qualify the film for 2016 Oscar consideration.

Meanwhile, sales agent Cinephil has already penned theatrical deals for France, Canada, Australia, Japan and the UK; and master documentarians Errol Morris and Werner Herzog have agreed to support the new film by signing on as executive producers (as they did with *Killing*).

In addition to coming off as thoughtful and articulate, Oppenheimer seems to possess a keen sense of history and context for his films. In his 2012 *realscreen* interview, he referred to Hannah Arendt's benchmark

Holocaust book *Eichmann in Jerusalem* as a touch point. This time around, he draws parallels between *Silence* and another preeminent genocide work: Claude Lanzmann's landmark film on the Jewish Holocaust, *Shoah*.

"*Shoah* is a really important example, because it's a film about the present, as it is haunted by the past," Oppenheimer says. "Lanzmann's decision not to use any archive footage – and my decision to do the same in both of my films echoes his – gives *Shoah* a very strong, cinematic 'now.'"

He adds that, like Lanzmann, he has sought with his diptych to make something that is "almost like a poem," but which is not comforting or easily digestible.

"To make a film about survivors of atrocity is to navigate a minefield of clichés, most of which serve not to do justice to the experience of the survivors

at all, but to reassure the viewer that somehow, a situation is well enough in hand that the viewer is able to let the story go easily at the end of the film," he

**"To make a film about survivors of atrocity is to navigate a minefield of clichés."**

explains, "to move on to something else; think about something else."

"These clichés are lies, and they do a disservice to any effort to really understand what it means to be a survivor. There's nothing that can awaken the dead, there's nothing that can put whole what's been broken, and – although we need truth, reconciliation, justice and healing moving forward – nothing will put right the lives that have been ruined or lost." ●



THE YEAR THAT CHANGED WORLD HISTORY FOREVER

# HITLER'S LAST YEAR



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# MIPCOM PICKS 2014



**BEST IN  
SHOW**

**F**rom daredevils to dogs, and from soldiers to *The Situation*, this year's crop of MIPCOM Picks covers a wide swath of factual and non-fiction content. Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the current geopolitical climate and the recent centenary of the First World War, conflict was a recurrent theme in clips submitted this time around.

Still, there was also a fair share of inspirational content, and a good amount of what we might call "stranger than fiction" (again, let's mention the dogs). Without further ado, here's a look at what the *realscreen* editorial team picked to click in Cannes, with the best in show claiming a pass to the 2015 Realscreen Summit for the submitter.

## LAST DAYS IN VIETNAM

**Partners:** A Moxie Firecracker production for 'American Experience'; distributed by PBS International

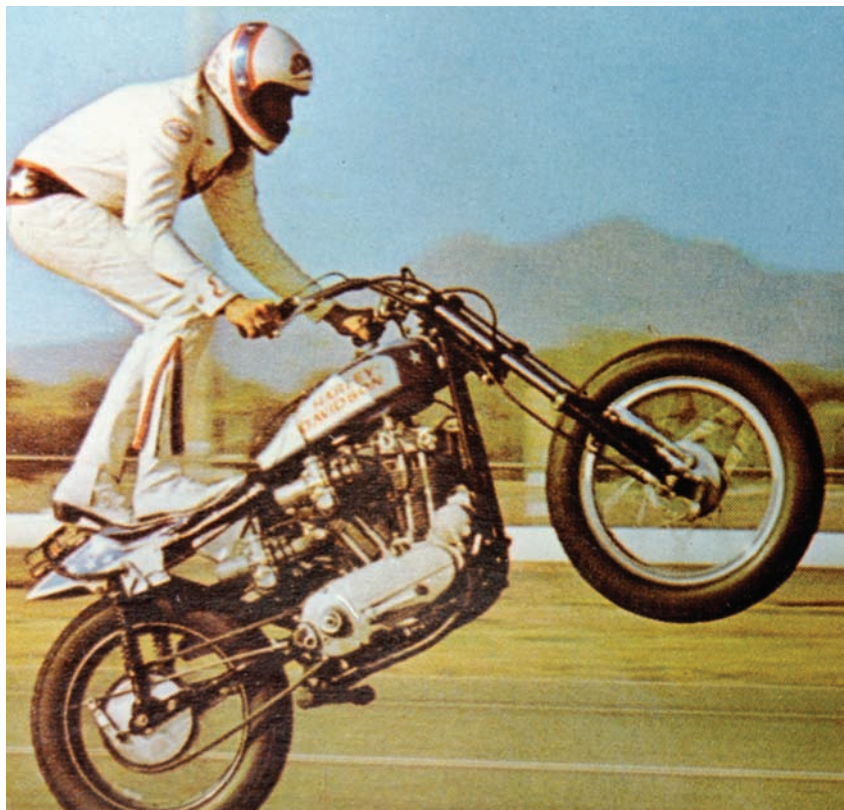
**Length:** 1 x 114 minutes or 1 x 98 minutes

**Premiered:** Sundance, 2014; airing on PBS in spring, 2015

**Rights available:** Worldwide

In April of 1975, as Saigon was about to fall to the North Vietnamese, the window of time for both American diplomats and military operatives, and South Vietnamese looking to evacuate was rapidly closing. And for those Americans aiming to leave, there was an additional matter of grave concern – whether to obey the U.S. government mandate to evacuate only American citizens, or to risk being charged with treason for helping facilitate the escape of the South Vietnamese. Rory Kennedy (*Ethel*, *Ghosts of Abu Ghraib*) revisits those crucial days with stunning archive and riveting testimony from those who were there, casting a long-overdue spotlight on the many examples of selfless heroism that marked those final fraught days of the conflict.





## I AM EVEL KNieVEL

**Partners:** Network Entertainment in association with Thunderbird Films for Spike TV; distributed by FremantleMedia International

**Length:** 1 x 90 minutes

**Premiered:** September 2014 (Spike TV)

**Rights available:** World excluding U.S. territories and possessions, and Canada (but including non-exclusive, Spanish-speaking Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands): All free and pay TV, all streaming, all NT & closed circuit. World excluding Canada: All physical and digital video subject to U.S. Internet streaming rights exclusion

Featuring original, exclusive interviews with family members, friends and famous fans, as well as adrenaline-soaked archive, this special documents the life of the man who put "extreme" into sport – Robert Craig Knievel, better known as "Evel." In time for the 40th anniversary of his infamous Snake River Canyon jump, in which he narrowly cheated death while attempting to jump the canyon on a rocket-powered motorcycle, the film charts his journey from small town rebel in Butte, Montana, to becoming the most notorious daredevil in the world.

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## THE HUMAN TISSUE SQUAD

**Partners:** True Stories Productions for BBC3; distributed by Electric Sky

**Length:** 2 x 57 minutes

**Premiered:** September 2014 (BBC3)

**Rights available:** All rights available excluding UK, Sweden, Denmark, Norway and Australia

Death is a part of life. This two-part observational documentary follows the young team at the NHS Blood and Transplant Tissue Bank in Liverpool, the largest retrieval and storage facility for human tissue in the UK. While many may consider the work undertaken by the team to be grisly, the program reveals the vital importance of the work itself, while demystifying both the process and the people behind it.

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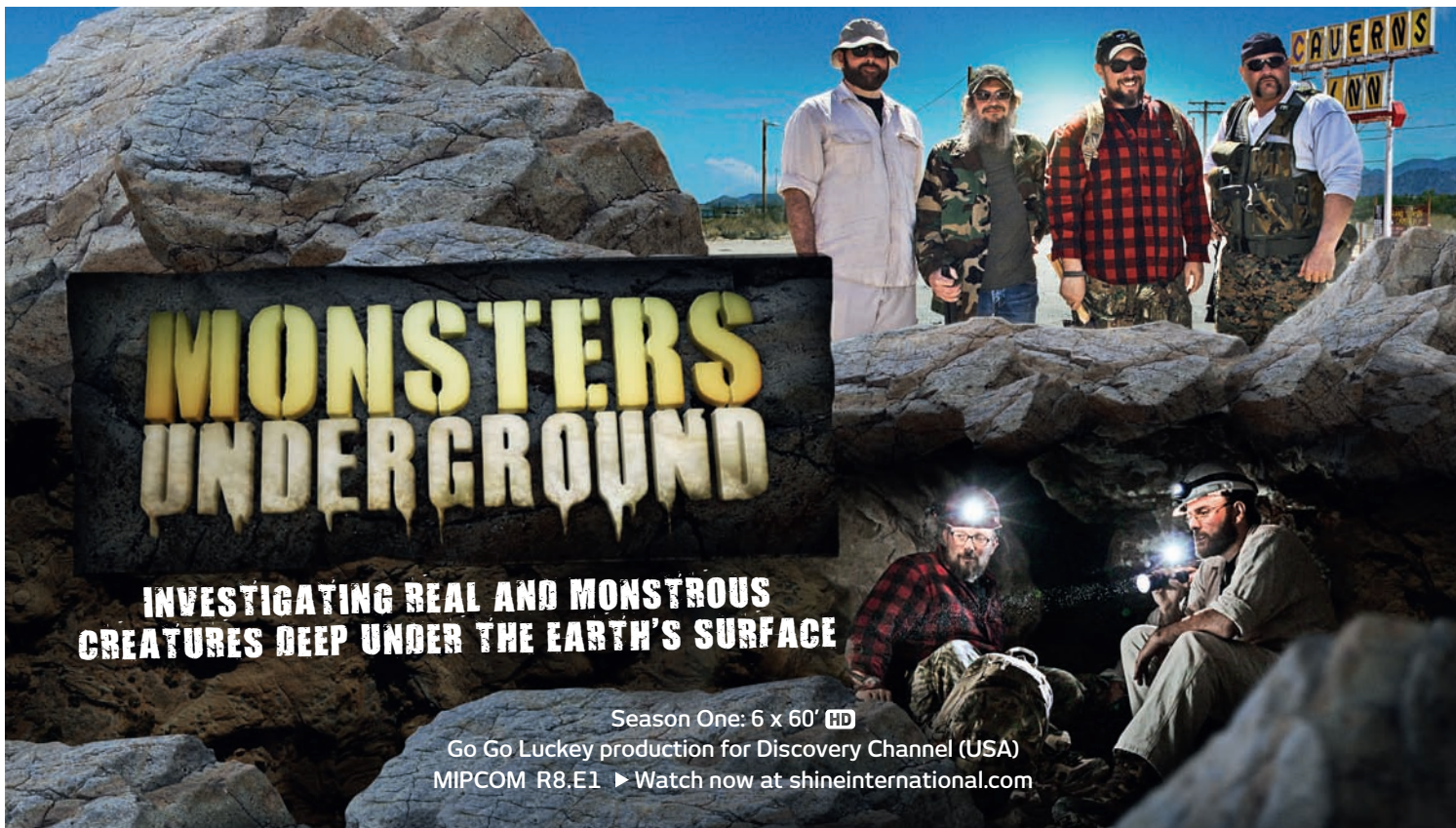


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## THE SORRENTINOS

**Partners:** Jarrett Creative for TVGN; distributed internationally by Banijay International

**Length:** 9 x 30 minutes

**Premiered:** July 2014 (TVGN)

**Rights available:** Worldwide excluding the U.S., U.S. territories, and the Caribbean

Mike Sorrentino, better known as “The Situation,” was part of the ensemble cast behind one of reality television’s biggest hits, MTV’s *Jersey Shore*. When that series’ six-season run came to an end in 2012, several cast members scored their own series. Now it’s Mike’s turn, via this family-focused vehicle. Here, you’ll meet the Sorrentino clan, including brothers Marc and Frank (aka “The Man”), sister and “official ringleader” of the family Melissa, and mother Linda (aka “Peaches”), and watch as they help Mike with his own challenges, while also straddling the balance between fame and family.



## EVERYDAY MIRACLES

**Partners:** BBC with The Open University; distributed by DCD Media Rights

**Length:** 2 x 60 minutes

**Aired:** August 2014 (BBC4)

**Rights available:** Worldwide excluding the UK and Eire

We are surrounded by stuff, and its ubiquitous nature tends to render it inconsequential in our eyes. But professor Mark Miodownik believes it’s nothing of the sort, and in this two-part special, he illuminates the stories behind the stuff in an effort to elevate the everyday. From razor blades (invented by King Camp Gillette in 1901) to foam rubber (discovered by accident in the 1930s), to stockings and plywood, Miodownik acts as our guide, spiriting us through the material world and its wonders.



## YOUNG MARVELS

**Partners:** Tremendous! Entertainment for Ovation; distributed by Shine International

**Length:** 10 x 30 minutes

**Premiered:** July 2014 (Ovation)

**Rights available:** Worldwide

While we are tempted to look at child prodigies as the lucky recipients of incredible talents, the truth is that being a prodigy is hard work. It’s one thing to have a natural gift, but it’s quite another to take the time to hone it into something truly remarkable. This series follows several gifted kids as they navigate the typical peaks and valleys of childhood while also devoting time, spirit and energy to their artistic paths. You’ll meet such marvels as 12-year-old cellist Charlie (pictured), eight-year-old ballroom dancer Lev, and Mabou, who – at the age of eight – has mastered a whopping eight languages and several instruments.



## KATHERINE MILLS: MIND GAMES

**Partners:** Crook Productions and Objective Productions for Watch; distributed by BBC Worldwide

**Length:** 4 x 50 minutes

**Premiering:** October 2014

**Rights available:** Worldwide rights available

Call her a mentalist; call her a psychological illusionist. Either way, she's making a big name for herself in the UK's burgeoning magic telly genre, and this new series, commissioned for UKTV's Watch channel, should go some way to extending her reach internationally. In addition to her love of magic, Mills also studied psychology and sociology, and in this series she uses group experiments to reveal how we are subconsciously influenced by the world around us, and how that influence impacts our decisions and interactions. Fun and thought-provoking.



## HOW TO BUILD A CASTLE (w/t)

**Partners:** Lion Television for BBC2; distributed by All3Media International

**Length:** 5 x 60 minutes

**Airing:** Winter 2015

**Rights available:** Television rights excluding the UK; home entertainment, ancillary and interactive rights worldwide

From the team behind the successful "Farm" franchise (*Victorian Farm*, *Wartime Farm*, *Edwardian Farm* and *Tudor Monastery Farm*) comes another slice of "living history." Here, historian Ruth Goodman and archaeologists Peter Ginn and Tom Pinfold head to France to experience medieval living in an authentic castle that's been years in the making. As with the other series in the franchise, *Castle* is an exquisite-looking, captivating glimpse of a simpler past.



## PHOTOGRAPHING AFRICA WITH HARRY HOOK

**Partners:** Testimony Films for BBC4; distributed by DCD Media Rights

**Length:** 1 x 60 minutes

**Aired:** March 2014 (BBC4)

**Rights available:** Worldwide excluding the UK and Eire

This special follows photographer and film director Harry Hook as he travels across Africa and documents various tribal groups. Hook, who grew up in Sudan and Kenya, has been examining Africa through the camera lens for 40 years. In this program he aims to chart not only the changes of the continent he loves, with its people increasingly embracing city life over remote communities, but also the evolutions of some of his subjects, including five Samburu women he first photographed in Kenya some 30 years ago.





## 15,000 KIDS AND COUNTING

**Partners:** True Vision Productions for Channel 4; distributed internationally, excluding the UK, by DRG

**Length:** 3 x 60 minutes

**Aired:** April 2014 (Channel 4)

**Rights available:** All rights outside of the UK

According to current statistics, on average, one child is taken into care every 20 minutes in Britain. Child protection levels are at a record high, with more than 15,000 children waiting to be adopted in 2013 – double the number from five years earlier. It's against that backdrop that True Vision and Channel 4 explore the adoption process in its entirety: from birth parents and adopters, to social workers and the children themselves.



## SKY JUMPERS

**Partners:** Muse Entertainment for Shaw Media; distributed by Muse Distribution International

**Length:** 1 x 90 minutes

**Aired:** July 2014 (History Canada)

**Rights available:** Worldwide excluding Canada, Spanish-speaking U.S., Europe, Brazil and Finland

Shot over a period of six years with a steady supply of GoPro and Sony helmet-mounted cameras and more than a little intestinal fortitude, *Sky Jumpers* follows the exploits of world-renowned skydiving troupe The PD Factory Team. From speed flying to BASE-jumping, the Florida-based team holds myriad world records and titles. But even with its air-gliding expertise, the group isn't shielded from the unpredictable, and tragedy can strike at a moment's notice. Here, you'll see some incredible feats, and experience the highs and lows that can come with the territory when pursuing the ultimate thrill.



## LOST WORLDS WITH MONTY HALLS AND LEO HOULDING

**Partners:** Electric Sky for Discovery; distributed by Electric Sky Distribution

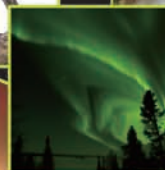
**Length:** 6 x 48 minutes

**Airing:** January 2015 (Discovery Networks Western Europe, Discovery Channel UK, Sky 3D)

**Rights available:** All rights available in Asia, Australasia, Nordics, Eastern Europe and Middle East

For this series, natural historian/adventurer Monty Halls and survivalist/explorer Leo Houlding pair up for thrill-seeking yet informative voyages to some of the world's greatest, and most dangerous, natural vistas. With Halls keeping an eye out for wildlife unique to the regions, and Houlding attempting to push his climbing expertise to its outermost limits by tackling some of the most challenging peaks on Earth, audiences will experience the natural world at its most dazzling and daunting.

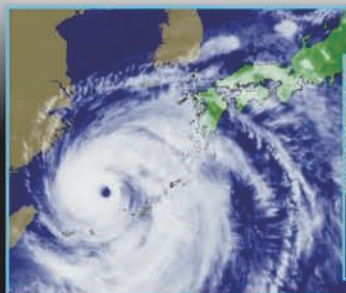




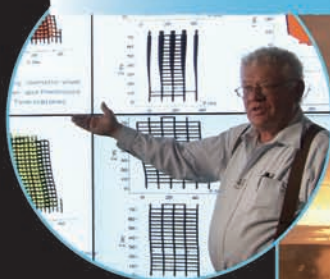
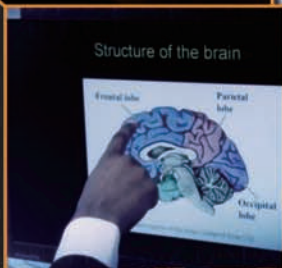
# WILDLIFE



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# RAGING EARTH



# THE SUPERNATURAL: A Scientific Perspective





## THE SUPERVET

**Partners:** Blast! Films for Channel 4; distributed by Zodiak Rights

**Length:** 4 x 60 minutes (series one); 8 x 60 minutes (series two)

**Premiered:** May 2014 (series one)

**Rights available:** Worldwide rights available excluding C4 primary rights and U.S. rights

Recently renewed for a second season due to air later this year, this Channel 4 series has struck a chord with audiences in the UK, averaging an 8% share across all viewing for the first series. The program follows the action at UK veterinary hospital Fitzpatrick Referrals, led by surgeon Noel Fitzpatrick and staffed by a team of 100 nurses, physiotherapists and hydrotherapists. But while the animals featured here – including a “bionic” dog, Rufus the hobbling rabbit and Tiger, the cat who has used up at least one of his nine lives – are certainly part of the attraction, the care and dedication of Fitzpatrick and his crew makes for captivating television.



## LOCKED UP IN AMERICA: SOLITARY NATION

**Partners:** A ‘Frontline’ production with Mongoose Pictures in association with the BBC; distributed by PBS International

**Length:** 1 x 53 minutes | **Aired:** April 2014 (PBS)

**Rights available:** Worldwide

*The New York Times*, in advance of this ‘Frontline’ documentary’s U.S. premiere, called *Solitary Nation* “about as hopeless an hour of television as you can imagine, which is exactly the reason to watch it.” For the first installment of a two-part report on the prison system in America, producer/director Dan Edge gained rare access to the solitary confinement unit at the maximum security Maine State Prison, where a new warden is trying to reduce the number of inmates in segregation. As the *NYT* suggests, it’s not a doc for the faint of heart, but as a window into the world of solitary confinement – from the vantage points of both inmates and the officers overseeing the unit – it’s completely engrossing. (Photo: ‘Frontline’)



## THE HUNT FOR HITLER’S MISSING MILLIONS

**Partners:** TVT Productions for Channel 5/Smithsonian Channel; distributed by TCB Media Rights

**Length:** 1 x 60 minutes

**Aired:** June 2014 (Channel 5, Smithsonian Channel)

**Rights available:** Worldwide excluding U.S. and UK

In the months following World War II, an incredible artifact was uncovered within the coat lining of a captured Nazi official: the last will and testament of Adolf Hitler, written just hours before the dictator committed suicide. This special, featuring an interview with the last surviving witness of the will’s discovery, reveals the secrets contained within, as well as the story behind the finding of the will by British intelligence officers, and the efforts to uncover the vast wealth Hitler kept hidden.



## ZOO REVOLUTION

**Partners:** Dream Street Pictures in association with CBC Television; distributed by Beyond International

**Length:** 1 x 60 minutes

**Aired:** July 2014 (CBC 'Doc Zone')

All animal lovers would agree on the importance of conservation and education about the animal kingdom, but there's one area that causes a divide amongst those who care for the world's assorted creatures. And that's the value of zoos. Some see the zoo as antiquated at best, and as animal prisons at worst, while others maintain that zoos are a vital component in the drive towards conserving species and educating future generations about animal issues. This doc travels the globe and rounds up assorted animal lovers and experts to discuss if and why zoos matter.



## BEHIND THE ARTIST

**Partners:** Let's Pix; distributed by Zed

**Length:** 10 x 52 minutes

**Aired:** 2014 (Paris Première)

**Rights available:** Worldwide

While some of us prefer to know as little as possible about the toil and tumult needed to create our favorite art, preferring to bask in the experience instead of the back-story, many are keen to learn more about the inspiration and perspiration involved in the artistic process. Here, you'll learn what made some of the masters tick – from Le Corbusier to Lichtenstein, from Picasso to Van Gogh – and how their work was impacted and influenced by the world around them.



## WORLD'S RICHEST DOGS

**Partners:** Seven Network Operations; distributed by TCB Media Rights

**Length:** 1 x 60 minutes

**Airing:** No TX date at present

**Rights available:** Worldwide excluding Australia

From the evidence displayed in this program, it is indeed a dog's life, or it can be. Here, you'll meet extremely pampered pups who enjoy life in the lap of luxury and the humans who are only too happy to keep their four-legged friends' tails wagging, regardless of the price. You'll meet Poopie-Doopie, who was married to a blue-haired poodle in a ceremony costing in the neighborhood of US\$300,000. There's also blinged-out Bentley, who enjoys the attention of a full-time nanny.



## STAFF PICKS

Here, our editorial crew highlights programs that they thought stood out amongst the pack of submissions.



## TRIBAL SCENT

**Partners:** CM Film for NITV; distributed by ABC Commercial

**Length:** 1 x 54 minutes | **Airing:** November 2014 | **Rights available:** All media, worldwide

If there's a lifeblood ingredient of the US\$30 billion-a-year perfume industry, it's sandalwood oil. Sandalwood is also used symbolically – and heavily – in the Buddhist, Sufi and Hindu religions. However, the sandalwood tree itself is in grave danger of extinction, with 80% of the remaining plants restricted to one location: the Western Australia outback. The gorgeously shot *Tribal Scent* follows the journey of Nyungar activist and aboriginal Renaissance man Dr. Richard Walley as he labors with scientists and French fragrance manufacturers to preserve one of the few remaining indigenous Sandalwood reserves. **Nick Krewen**



## LAST FALLEN SOLDIER

**Partners:** Artisans du film, Miyu Productions and ECPAD with Planète+; distributed by Zed

**Length:** 1 x 52 minutes | **Aired:** May 2014 (Planète+)

**Rights available:** Worldwide

On November 11, 1918, after an armistice deal was struck between the Allies and Germany, 40-year-old private Augustin Trébuchon of France was tasked with delivering the message to the Germans. As he made his way across the battlefield in the French region of Champagne-Ardenne, Trébuchon was shot to death just five minutes before the ceasefire was instated. By integrating animation and archival footage, this innovative doc tackles the armistice from the perspectives of the leaders involved in the negotiations, and the story of Trébuchon and his fellow soldiers in the 415th Infantry Regiment. **Manori Ravindran**



## THE DECENT ONE

**Partners:** Produced and directed by Vanessa Lapa, with ORF (Austria), MDR/WDR/ARD (Germany) Yes.docu (Israel); sales agent: Cinephil; distributed by Kino Lorber in U.S.; various int'l distributors

**Length:** 1 x 96 minutes | **Premiered:** February 2014 (Berlinale) | **Rights available:** All rights outside of U.S., Canada, France, Austria, Poland, Italy, Germany, Australia/NZ; UK deal pending.

Vanessa Lapa's unflinching portrait of Heinrich Himmler focuses on the notorious high-ranking Nazi's personal archives, letters and diaries. Composed entirely of archive footage and voice-over, the doc juxtaposes Himmler the caring family man, who would regularly send doting letters to his wife, daughter and mistress, with Himmler the ruthless mass murderer, who – working closely with Hitler – was one of the key architects of the Holocaust. With May 2015 marking 70 years since the end of World War II, it will benefit from a natural TV anniversary tie-in. **Adam Benzine**



## THE SECRET LIFE OF STUDENTS

**Partners:** Raw TV for Channel 4; distributed by ITV Studios Global Entertainment

**Length:** 4 x 60 minutes | **Premiered:** July 2014 (Channel 4)

**Rights available:** Format rights: worldwide excluding UK and N.A.; finished: worldwide excl. UK

For this British series on the foibles of first-year undergrads at the University of Leicester, producer Raw TV developed a technology called Digital Rig (or D:Rig) that allows the cast to share text messages and social media activity with producers via customized smartphones. It's essentially a data-driven docusoap that amplifies the on-screen action – in this case, drinking games, pub crawls and grappling with morning-after consequences – with bright graphics and text bubbles rendering the students' online lives in visual form. Coming soon to C4, a follow-up: *The Secret Life of Teens*. **Kevin Ritchie** •



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**Critics' Choice Movie Awards** (1 x 2 hours)  
Celebrating its 20th year, the CCMA is among the most star-studded events of the awards season.



**Tiny House Nation**  
(10 x 1 hour and  
1 x 1 hour Special)  
From micro-apartments  
in Manhattan to exquisite  
tiny row homes in

Savannah, this series celebrates the exploding tiny house movement of extreme downsizing.

**Epic Meal Empire** (16 x ½ hour and 1 x 1 hour special)  
The Epic Meal Empire team is a viral sensation that delivers recipes that are visually mind-blowing spins on food preparation and presentation.

**The World Wars** (6 x 1 hour or 3 x 2 hours)  
A look at the wars and the soldiers from WWI who became the leaders of WWII.

**Wahlburgers** (26 x 1/2 hour + 1 x 1 hour special)  
Hollywood stars Mark and Donnie Wahlberg join forces with their brother to run a sizzling burger venture.



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Executives attending:

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Maggie Murphy (Head, Shaftesbury U.S.)  
Joanna Webb (SVP, Content Strategy)  
Ryan St. Peters (VP, Kids & Family)  
Jay Bennett (VP, Digital/Creative Director, Smokebomb)  
Katherine Wolfgang (VP, Marketing & Communications)  
Rebecca Herr (Marketing Executive)



**Life After Digital**  
(One-hour documentary)  
This documentary offers a startling look at the unintended consequences

of our wired world - from revenge porn, cyberbullying and trolling to facial recognition technologies that turn the face of every social media user into a barcode.

**Romeos & Juliets** (One-hour documentary)  
This documentary offers a rare behind-the-curtain look at the making of Romeo and Juliet in the studios of the National Ballet of Canada, as envisioned by world-famous choreographer Alexei Ratmansky.

**Why Men Cheat** (One-hour documentary)  
This documentary investigates the truth behind the murky motivations of powerful men who endanger marriages, reputations and careers in their quest for illicit moments.

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**YOU CAN'T LICK YOUR ELBOW** – NatGeo (6 x 30')

The brand-new, fun family-friendly series about the weird, clever and amazing things you can – and sometimes can't – do with the human body.

**MOVIES ROCK** – CBS (1 x 120')

The performance-packed CBS special that brings together entertainment's biggest names to salute and celebrate the powerful and indelible impact music has on the film industry.



**2015 57th ANNUAL GRAMMY® AWARDS** – CBS (1 x 210')

*Music's Biggest Night®* will deliver exhilarating performances and exceptional ratings when the world's brightest megastars light up the stage on television's most prestigious music event.

**ONE OF US, SÓCRATES, ONE OF US** – RAI (1 x 60')

The fascinating story of one of Brazil's most cherished sons, Sócrates, the brilliant captain of the country's national soccer team, whose leadership on the field was matched by his leadership of Brazilians off the field in the people's fight for democracy.



**2015 21st ANNUAL SCREEN ACTORS GUILD® AWARDS** - TNT/TBS (1 x 120')

One of the awards season's premiere events in which actors vote solely for actors in honoring the finest film and television performances of the year.

**TOP 20 FUNNIEST** – truTV (38 x 60')

Comedic commentary charts the best viral videos, home movies, surveillance clips, event footage and news bloopers, as we count down to the world's most hilarious video.



**BRITS ICON ELTON JOHN** – ITV (1 x 90')

The gala event that salutes the rock legend and includes his live performances of "Your Song", "Rocket Man", "Tiny Dancer", "Bennie And The Jets", "Philadelphia Freedom", "I'm Still Standing", and "Sad Songs (Say So Much)",

performed with his close friend, superstar Rod Stewart.

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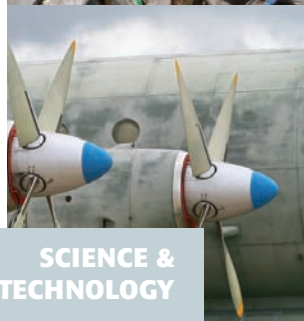
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# ALL THE RIGHT MOVES

BY BRENDAN CHRISTIE

From a staff of two to a global content company with myriad regional offices, Off the Fence has built its operation and its reputation on smart diversification, and commitment to service. *Realscreen* spotlights the company, its projects and its people, as it celebrates its 20th anniversary.

**F**rom the start, Amsterdam-headquartered Off the Fence (OTF) was meant to be a different kind of company.

When it began in 1994, there were distribution, production and consulting companies, but OTF was something else. "It needed to be a company that adapted, and learned to provide broadcasters with everything they don't do," explains CEO Ellen Windemuth, "either because they don't want to, don't have time to, or they can't."

Serving broadcasters is the end goal for any content company, says Windemuth. "You have to stay advertiser friendly, and you have to get ratings. You need to move in between the two all the time, and you really need to understand that that's your reality. You've got to satisfy those needs because otherwise the people you work for are going to get fired, and then you're back to square one."

It's that decisiveness that gave the company its name. "Making decisions is paramount in our industry," she explains. "I would rather have a fast 'no' than a two-year 'maybe.' I wanted the company name to inspire people that we can handle 'no,' but we don't like dithering."

What began 20 years ago in an office with only two people – Windemuth and her secretary – has since grown to nearly 100, scaling up to handle production as required. More importantly, perhaps, the company has managed double-digit growth every year in the last few years, even

in the face of a stalled world economy.

"What they bring is an underlying intelligence to the series they create and they give very good value for money," says Dan Korn, SVP and head of programming for Discovery Networks Western Europe. "They provide very decent production values on reasonable, but not over-lavish, budgets. And, partly because Ellen herself has got a good sense of humor, they are able to bring a nice tone to it so that you never feel that you're undermining the subjects of your documentary. You're examining them in a warm and inclusive environment."

"It comes down to how you can best tell the story," maintains Windemuth. "We make primetime wildlife that is blue chip but has a reality mix, and we make reality shows that are very vérité. We basically start by saying: 'How can we best tell this story? How can we best tell it using the technology we have available? How can we best tell it using the storytelling tools we have available?'"

Obviously, the Off the Fence philosophy has struck a chord.



Windemuth





**Monkey Thieves,**  
produced by Off the  
Fence, aired on National  
Geographic Channel and  
France 5.

**“We basically start by saying: ‘How can we best tell this story? How can we best tell it using the storytelling tools we have available?’”**

### BUILDING A GLOBAL BRAND

It began by getting to know the industry. “I stayed in constant dialog with my clients all over the world,” says Windemuth. “I went to all the conferences. I talked to everybody. So did the team.”

For its first decade, Off the Fence existed primarily as a natural history and factual concern, successfully distributing titles for production partners but not shying away from getting heavily involved in financing and executive producing in order to make projects happen. Some of the biggest titles in its catalog are natural history and science shows such as *Africa’s Outsiders*, *Monkey Thieves*, *Sharkman*, *Super Mole* and *Chernobyl Reclaimed*.

As the company entered its second decade, however, Windemuth saw a need to evolve. Co-financing gave way to dedicated production, wildlife was joined by a much wider array of factual production, and OTF began significant and targeted global expansion.

That involved building what she calls “the best management team in the business.” Through a mutual friend, Windemuth was introduced to Darrel James and brought him in as COO. She says today that James has been “pivotal in the company’s growth and success.”



James had worked in content production and rights exploitation for 30 years, in roles such as MD for Scottish Television Productions, controller of rights and business affairs at ITV and head of acquisitions and coproductions at S4C Wales.

“My first day with the company was a baptism of fire,” recalls James. “I had barely walked through the door before having to draft a deal memo for a major coproduction. It’s been a rollercoaster from day one but I take great pride in what we have achieved creatively, and the fact that we have scaled up the company threefold in both turnover and EBITDA.”

The growth began as OTF opened its first regional office in Bristol in 2006 (see page 54). South Africa and Germany followed the next year, then Singapore, New York and, in June of 2013, Los Angeles. The company also began to acquire catalogs from such companies as the Smithsonian Channel, Voom, WE tv, IFC Films and Fox International Channels.

“Strategically,” explains Windemuth, “we were just mirroring what Discovery and National Geographic were doing as broadcasters. It made sense that if I wanted to supply them with everything that they don’t do themselves, I needed to mirror their structures and I needed to access local talent pools to help them with local programming.

“Each of our regional offices has a very specific production mandate,” she adds. “In the U.S. alone, we work for 11 different broadcasters.” The LA production office, with development spearheaded by Havva Eisenbaum, recently produced *Generation Cryo*, a critically acclaimed, six-part reality series for MTV about donor-conceived children, and Windemuth says the company is working more in the lifestyle space.

“We produce primetime programming in German for ARTE and ZDF, and have a very loyal base of client broadcasters all over the world,” she adds, giving further evidence of OTF’s geographic and content range.

Bo Stehmeier, managing director of distribution at OTF since 2007, says localization was a critical key to the company's success, and observes that nearly every regional office was opened on the back of a production deal. "We thought, 'We're going to be in that space for a year to deliver this film or series,'" he says. "So while we're there, why don't we incorporate, put a seller into the production office, and grow from there?" It was very organic growth."

It also gave broadcasters confidence that their investments were aiding local infrastructure, and that OTF understood how regional needs and flavors would play into a final cut.

And, as the Off the Fence catalog expanded to incorporate different genres, it could handle bigger assignments from broadcasters. Says Stehmeier: "We've recently done big deals in Eastern Africa, Southeastern Europe and Asia, where if you buy 700 hours with 10 repeats, you can set up a pay station or a DTT station and run for two years with just the stock you have acquired from us. That's a whole new business that is coming to us."



**OMG! Sextuplets! is part of OTF's growing lifestyle catalog.**

### MAKING THE MONEY WORK

When looking back over the last two decades of business, one of the things Windemuth says she's most proud of is the fact that Off the Fence has won over 90 awards for its shows, despite often modest budgets. It comes back to the full-

service philosophy. Diversification has given OTF ways to create high quality, accessible content in a financially responsible way – something that was clearly demonstrated during the recent economic turmoil.

*continued on page 55 ►* 053



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# Superhuman ability

Now a global entity, OTF's growth accelerated with its production office in Bristol

**In** 2006, Off the Fence opened its first dedicated production office in Bristol under the direction of Allison Bean, a veteran of ITV and Granada TV's production divisions. Her mandate was as wide as it was simple: Create a content entity that would complement the success the company had already experienced in coproduction and distribution.

"It was an opportunity for me to create the job I wanted," recalls Bean. "Who can say no to that? Ellen handed me this great opportunity and has never once ceased to be supportive of every decision I've made."

It was, as Bean describes it, "a blank piece of paper," which was a bit of a shock for someone who had roamed the byzantine

halls of national broadcasters. "It was an extension of what I had already been doing, but all the layers of bureaucracy that had been above me were removed. It meant I could develop what I wanted, for whom I wanted, and therefore it allowed for the aspirations and plans that I had been thinking about for years to really come to fruition."

The first commission was a *Megastructures* episode about ice breakers for National Geographic Channel. The natural history series *Monkey Thieves* followed, and then the pilot for *Stan Lee's Superhumans*.

"There wasn't really one particular thing I focused on," she recalls. "I just focused on the areas I personally liked – the entertainment side of natural history and the popular science part of the television genre."

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Like others at OTF, Bean was allowed to follow her passions and be led by her instincts rather than a mandate from head office. "I think one of the company's strengths is that it fosters people who are ambitious and passionate about what they do in a productive way."

What was the turning point for OTF Bristol? Bean says it was the first season of *Stan Lee's Superhumans*, a successful series for History (now airing on sister network H2) about people with special abilities.

"I think the opportunity the History Channel gave us was phenomenal," she says. "It's not just another one-off or miniseries. It's there in the world as a brand and it's not ever going to vanish or be forgotten."

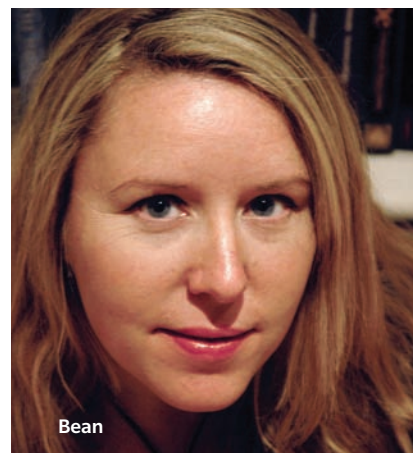
"From the beginning, I was always impressed with the look and the pace that OTF imbued [the series] with," offers Mike Stiller, VP of programming and development for History and H2. "I think it's a company with a really great visual style, but they are also skilled storytellers. So, the result was a factual program that was equal parts entertaining and informative."

◀ continued from page 53

"Production companies rely solely on commission work in order to survive," observes Allison Bean, managing director of OTF Bristol. "But because that's just a small portion of what we do now, we are never really exposed in the same way most production companies are. So when the commissions start to fall off a bit because there is a world recession, that's when we look to deficit financing productions that we know have a long shelf life."

That might mean, for example, that OTF focuses on getting projects like the 'Wildest' natural history strand out the door. "They take a couple years to make their money back," explains Bean, "but they do generate an excellent return. Our infrastructure is a well-oiled machine and we are firm in the way we manage shooting and costs. Therefore we're never exposed to any kind of catastrophic budget explosion."

They took a similar approach with the *Monkey Thieves* series. Though it initially



Bean

got some funding from the now defunct HD channel service Voom, says Bean, "It was enough to go filming and we knew it would do well in pre-sales. So we made the decision as a company to just go with it. What people in distribution have found is that if a program is already up and running and in production, it is easier to sell because a portion of the risk is already borne by us."

Sure enough, once commissioning editors

055

*The truth about reality* N<sup>o</sup>1

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saw that the first few shows surpassed expectations, there was a huge demand.

### BUILDING THE RIGHT TEAM

In addition to overseeing OTF, Windemuth is on the board of the Wildscreen Trust, the Jackson Hole Film Festival and the Wild Talk festival in South Africa, and sits on the steering committee of the World Science Congress. She was also an important contributor to the advisory board for the inaugural edition of Realscreen London in October.

And while a large part of the respect OTF commands in the industry can be directly traced back to Windemuth's work in building the operation, a creative company is only as strong as its component parts, and Windemuth points out that the other thing she's most proud of is her people.

"I think the entire team at Off the Fence probably has two qualities in common: drive and curiosity," she observes. "And if you put a lot of dynamic, curious people together, you generate a very wide range of successful projects." Now head of acquisitions, Georgina Eyre first joined the company

in 2007 to cover a maternity leave before returning full-time a few years later.

"I fell in love with the company when I first joined," she recalls. "It has always been a bit of a lifestyle at Off the Fence. It's an independent company, and you feel like you're part of a family even though there are people who work there from all over the world."

Windemuth's boots-on-the-ground philosophy definitely extends to her team. "We travel a lot," says Eyre. "Not only the



**Your Inner Fish**, produced by Tangled Bank Studios and Windfall Films for PBS, is one of the recent jewels in Off the Fence's distribution catalog.

acquisitions team, but the sales team as well. I think getting to know your clients on a personal level as well as on a professional level is very important."

In fact, Eyre's first day at OTF was spent at MIPCOM. "It is that spirit of, 'You're getting into the job so you might as well get in there quickly and start running because this is important,'" she says.

As for Bo Stehmeier's first day? "I wasn't even in Amsterdam," he says. "Ellen flew me straight to New York, and my first meeting was at Animal Planet for 9 a.m. I didn't even have a business card. I didn't have login details. And it was 110 degrees."

Stories such as that clearly demonstrate where the company's priorities are, and they've served it well so far. But what comes next?

"We're mid-way in our evolution," sums up Windemuth. "I feel, especially in the last nine years since Allison, Darrel and Bo joined the company, we have really hit our stride. We just need to do more of what we are doing and we will be absolutely fine."

"We are a fully rounded, mature company with strong systems and great people. Bring on the next 20 years." •

**"If you put a lot of dynamic, curious people together, you generate a very wide range of successful projects."**



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# wild guide 2014

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France 2 and new prodco Winds team up for illuminating wildlife doc

Filming  
"The African  
Night," part of  
*A Night on Earth*





With the Oculus Rift, Project Morpheus and Google Cardboard heralding a new generation of virtual reality headset devices, UK-based Atlantic Productions is aiming to get the jump on the competition by becoming the first major developer of natural history VR.

BY ADAM BENZINE

Realscreen's Adam Benzine tests the Oculus Rift at Sheffield Doc/Fest.



## VIRTUALLYWILD

**V**irtual reality was all the rage in the 1990s, with Hollywood blockbusters such as *The Lawnmower Man*, *Disclosure* and *eXistenZ* planting images of headset-wearing techies into society's collective consciousness. We were all supposed to be wearing futuristic headsets by now, but the VR revolution never took off, in part owing to the limitations of the computing power and CGI of the time.

Fast forward to the present day, however, and VR is once again a hot commodity – thanks largely to the buzz being created by U.S. firm Oculus VR, the creator of the Oculus Rift headset.

The company caused jaws to drop twice in the space of two years – first with its 2012 Kickstarter campaign, which saw it raising more than US\$2.4 million on a goal of \$250,000; and then again in March of this year, when Facebook announced it was buying the company in a \$2 billion deal.

The immersive, feels-like-you're-there nature of the Rift has spurred renewed global interest in VR, and while gaming firms have largely been the earliest adopters of the new generation of headsets, non-

fiction producers are also getting in on the game – particularly in the natural history space, where lush locales lend themselves to immersive experiences.

Leading the charge is UK indie Atlantic Productions (*Flying Monsters 3D*, *David Attenborough's Natural History Museum Alive 3D*), which in July announced it would be teaming up with VFX studio Zoo to launch Alchemy VR, a dedicated division for virtual reality production.

Atlantic chief exec Anthony Geffen – who also serves as CEO of Alchemy VR – says his firm first began exploring the potential of VR 20 years ago, as part of a partnership with Sun Microsystems. “There were a lot of problems then with rendering power and generally all the problems computing had a long time ago,” he recalls.

So far, Alchemy has shared details of two, as-yet-untitled VR projects on the way. The

first, tentatively titled *Egypt – A VR journey into the Ancient World*, focuses on the Great Pyramid of Giza.

“We are working with various scans that allow you, in your virtual reality, to go inside the Great Pyramid, for example, and at an incredible scale walk through the different chambers and find different things,” Geffen explains. “There is scanning

technology using something called Lidar, which scans – in incredible detail – the pyramid inside and outside.

“Or if you are in Machu Picchu, to capture a whole site, which can then be ported into our CGI systems, allowing us

to literally knit the whole

thing together in virtual reality.”

The second project Atlantic has on the go involves Sir David Attenborough, a frequent Atlantic collaborator (*Bachelor King*, *Micro Monsters*, *Kingdom of Plants*), and promises to take VR users on a journey to



What Google is calling “DIY VR for all”: its \$15 Google Cardboard project.

see some of the earth's earliest inhabitants.

Geffen says the production will be "a journey through the early stages of life," explaining: "What we are doing is making it so that you are in that ocean and can look anywhere in the sea, and the detail is very high – the kind of detail that people expect from natural history documentaries. We have developed a way of rendering out the images into something that is more akin to a film than a time rendered experience, and we are really excited about the tools we have built in-house to do that."

Alchemy plans to produce both live action and CGI content in VR, but – as was the case with Atlantic's first 3D productions – CGI will lead the way.

"We are realizing that the sweet spot for us is where we can draw on the incredible CGI we have built or can build out from it," Geffen says, "and we are now planning to start shooting things back in the natural world, as it were, with various cameras."

Phil Harper, Alchemy's creative director, adds that a new medium means a new method of communicating with the audience. "Creatively, we are focusing on mainly passive experiences, but passive in a film sense; you are still engaged in a film, and in a passive VR experience you are still expected to – and in many cases required to – look all around you," he says.

Atlantic is not the only firm in the natural history space seizing the virtual bull by the virtual horns. In September, tech start-up NextVR announced that it had formed a strategic alliance with Samsung and Oculus for technology that will allow content producers to shoot and broadcast live or pre-recorded high definition, three-dimensional VR content over the Internet.

Its NextVR Virtual Reality Digital Cinema Camera System promises to film ultra high-res, 360-degree 3D virtual reality content using, for example, a set-up of six RED Epic Dragon cameras.

DJ Roller, one of NextVR's co-founders, comes into the venture after many years spent working as a producer and cinematographer on Imax films and series



for networks such as Discovery, Nat Geo, PBS and the BBC.

While waxing lyrical about the broad potential for next-gen VR, Roller is particularly excited about the possibilities for natural history in the new medium. "A filmmaker can now take a content system to the South Pole, and you [the VR user] can really go there, or to the top of Mount Everest," he says.

"If you saw something like *Planet Earth* in a VR world... It's almost impossible to describe. It's going to be huge in factual; it's exciting in that there is going to be subject matter that people will film that will completely change people's perception."

The difficulty in describing the Oculus experience is one potential barrier to VR's growth. Just as native stereoscopic 3D had to be seen by many viewers before they were convinced that it was considerably different from the 3D of the past, so too do many Oculus advocates say one has to actually use the device to see its appeal.

But what will help the cause will be the availability of VR devices over the course of the next two years. In addition to the Oculus Rift, Sony is launching a device code-named Project Morpheus, and Google is getting in on the action with a low-priced, assemble-it-yourself device called Google Cardboard.

**Left: the Oculus Rift VR headset.**  
**Above: Atlantic's Egypt - A VR Journey Into the Ancient World.**

Ultimately, Atlantic is banking on the demand being high, well in advance of a market becoming established – a risky proposition, but one that could pay off.

"We are absolutely confident that the market will arise, and if we are to be pressed on what that market will look like, it is not going to be the same model that television and production companies are used to," Harper says.

"It is going to be much more along the lines of how digital agencies and gaming production companies work, where they come up with ideas in-house, they believe in their concept enough to find the funds to create those experiences, and then sell them directly to the consumer."



**A glimpse at Sony's Project Morpheus headset.**





# Walk on the Wild Side

BY MANORI RAVINDRAN

**A**s environmental filmmaking rides a wave of industry-changing technological advances, Bristol's biannual Wildscreen Film Festival – which runs from October 19 to 24 – is keeping pace in its 32nd year with sessions on everything from filming with drones to a 'Big Ideas' talk on the *Conquest of the Skies* 3D doc with Sir David Attenborough. *Realscreen* spoke with festival and events manager Charlotte Geeves, who oversees the overall strategies for the event, about what delegates can expect from this year's offering.

## **What's different about this year's festival, and what has changed from the 2012 event?**

We've increased the amount of content that's available, so there's fresher content as well as our 'Inside Story' strand and workshop. We've also increased our film screenings, so not only are we screening our nominated films, we're also curating a film strand. And amid all of those screenings, we are attaching Q&As, so we're getting filmmakers to talk and give the audiences a deeper understanding of those films.

We've launched a raw talent bursary scheme, too. It's an opportunity for an individual to come to the festival, and we'll partner them with a mentor and give them opportunities throughout the week and a mentorship that extends beyond the festival. It's about time to give opportunities to those individuals who can't enter the industry through traditional means, and I feel like the festival is a platform for these individuals to get a foot in the door and meet the right people.

## **Have you noticed any themes in this year's submissions?**

There has been a recurring theme of poaching. We are doing a big session on it, looking at the media and whether it's a help or a hindrance. Another theme has been animals' intelligence, emotions and interspecies relationships. We're going to do a session on this theme and what the future holds, examining the influences on the way we look at nature and the subjects we cover, and whether it's just technological developments and current affairs, or if there are other factors that may be involved.

## **Have you noticed any trends in wildlife filmmaking over the past two years? Does the field still occupy the same space in filmmaking?**

The industry's still really, really strong. I think the trend we're noticing now is that there are more individuals producing content in different formats. It's not that there's a move away from the traditional broadcasters and channels – those are still very much in place – but as far as the digital space is concerned, people are producing short-form content and there's a lot airing. The blue-chip natural history programming and series are still there, but the one-off specials are not holding as high a space as they were in 2012.

## **Is the industry much different now than it was, say, five years ago?**

Yes, absolutely. The industry's grown tremendously. The amount of production companies we have in Bristol alone have increased and I think they would say that the major traditional broadcasters are not programming as much natural history as they have in the past. There are other broadcasters now who have come into the sphere and are programming more content. There's as much blue chip natural history being produced, but there's also a lot of specialist factual programs now which have either a science background or a natural history background.

## **How has the festival evolved since launching in 1982?**

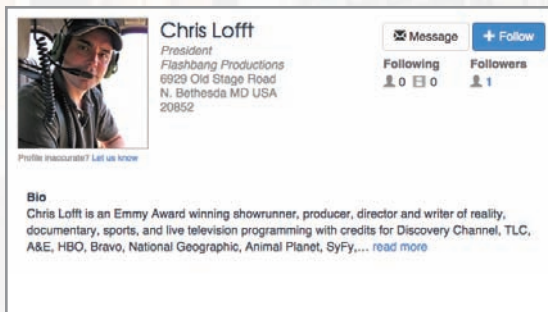
I think the festival has grown in size, and in the amount of content we get from the delegates and the amount of people coming. What I am keen to do is grow the delegates who come into contact with the festival. With the expansion of technology, and how you can talk to anyone in the world at any time, there is still value in meeting face-to-face with people.



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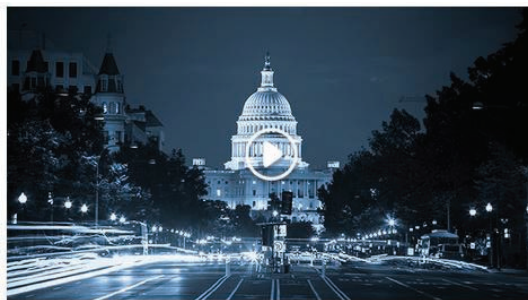
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# Wild nights in **color**

BY MARIE-AGNÈS BRUNEAU

French indie Winds and pubcaster France 2 caused a stir earlier this year after jointly unveiling stills from a wildlife special that purportedly featured natural history footage filmed at nighttime in full color. Here, the partners tell *realscreen* what to expect from the groundbreaking project.

**Producers of *A Night on Earth* aren't yet saying how they are getting such vivid images.**

**F**rench pubcaster France 2 and production company Winds made headlines at Sunny Side of The Doc in June, unveiling *Une nuit sur terre* (*A Night on Earth*), a groundbreaking wildlife doc venture, which, at press time, also has Jacques Perrin's Galatée Films and China's CCTV9 on board.

The special promises to introduce new technology allowing producers to film in color at night. The first 90-minute installment, entitled *The African Night*, is currently in production, filmed in 4K on a budget of €2.5 million (approximately US\$3.2 million) and set to air in primetime this Christmas.

Winds, a relatively new prodco, was launched in 2011 by Barthélémy Fougéa, the former partner – together with his brother Frédéric – at Boréales (*Hanuman*, *Homo Sapiens*). The company's track record already includes a theatrical feature hit, by way of the 2014 César best documentary-winner *Sur le chemin de l'école* (*On the Way to School*), about children struggling to go to school in faraway lands, which sold 1.3 million tickets.

The rest of the creatives aren't newcomers either. Writer Stéphane Durand and director Thierry Machado both worked in the past on a number of theatrical docs with Perrin and Galatée Films, with Durand having served as the co-writer, scientific advisor and assistant director of *Winged Migration*, *Oceans*, and *Seasons*; and Machado having been a camera operator on *Winged Migration* and *Microcosms*, for which he won a César award for best cinematography in 1997. This is how Perrin heard about the project and became involved as a coproducer. "It's very important that he joined us, because of his reputation," Fougéa says.

"The idea of filming wildlife at night was a long-time dream," says Machado, "since I saw Gerard Vienne's [late 1970s] theatrical movie *La griffe et la dent* [*Fang and Claw*], about the very intense life of animals at night. At the time I said to myself, 'Maybe one day, technology will enable us to go further.'"

Fougéa adds: "The idea resurfaced after I produced *Facing the Killer Volcano* in Japan with NHK, which at the time had developed the HARP camera, enabling filming in very low light. We thought there might be a way there."

Since then, "we have been testing just about everything available to shoot at night," Machado continues. "As major technological developments are often military in nature, we explored that avenue as well, testing, for instance [Airbus Group-owned] Cassidian Optronics' thermal red light, but what the military develops does not necessarily produce quality images.

"So we continued to search and search. At one point, Canon developed a camera with a very sensitive sensor... each time we believed that we were on the right track and each time we were disappointed, until one day – finally – there was an incident during shooting with a camera... and an image appeared!"

Wildlife filmmakers across the globe will have to remain in a state of suspense – for the time being at least – as the team says it won't reveal its method until the film is complete.

"It's a big secret. Only three of us know," says Machado. "All I can say is that everything was there already. Previously, all our research was oriented solely around the sensitivity of the sensors, but the answer was elsewhere. We tried cameras of up to

80,000 ISO, and the one we are using is only 25,000 ISO. We are filming with the Canon C500, but it could have been another [camera].”

All in all, “the development stage took a year and a half,” adds Fougea, although he says the project’s business model was “a real risk” since there was no guarantee of success.

“The African Night” focuses on the story of an elephant calf learning about its group’s social life during its journey through Southern Africa by night. “We decided we needed an emblematic animal focusing on its behaviour when becoming nocturnal, while also showing plenty of night creatures as secondary characters, including some we don’t know about,” Fougea explains.

The story is based on the phenomenon studied by scientists, thanks to GPS necklaces, of families of elephants each year migrating in the dry season from Zimbabwe, across the Kalahari desert, and towards the Boteti river, travelling at night to avoid heat.

“We followed them for seven weeks in September last year, then went back in the spring, and again this autumn,” says Machado. The production team worked in partnership with a team of CNRS scientists led by elephant and Africa specialist Hervé Fritz. “The problem we had in writing the story was that scientists don’t know much about animals’ behavior at night,” Machado adds. “Some of their theories, after we had shot, even proved to be wrong. This documentary is really like an exploration – it’s quite nice when technology and documentary enable science to make progress. This documentary will be asking questions; there is a poetic dimension in it.”

Originally, flagship pubcaster France 2 commissioned Winds for a 52-minute special for its Sunday afternoon natural history strand ‘Grandeur Nature,’ but upgraded it to a 90-minute primetime special after seeing the first shoots in color at night.

“We had decided to commission one or two French wildlife documentaries for primetime per year,” explains Fabrice Puchault, director of documentaries for France 2, which dedicates six to 10 primetime strands to docs per year.

France 2 partners with the BBC on some wildlife docs, having previously broadcast *Africa* in primetime in January 2013 to a 15% share, and having this year in April shown *Hidden Kingdoms*, which had 13.5%.

“We are also involved in *One Planet* and *Monkey Planet*,” Puchault adds. The channel’s first French-led production, *Boréales’ Le plus beau*

*pays du monde*, was a success in December last year, pulling in seven million viewers and a 24% share, “and was also a success on BBC2’s ‘Natural World’,” Puchault – who has commissioned a sequel – points out proudly.

“For primetime, we are looking for really spectacular wildlife, especially when scheduling it around Christmas, as we consider programs as gifts to our viewers. This one will definitely bring in something magical.”

To make the special truly special, the filmmakers say that some creative work will be required in the

At press time, the exact financial make-up had not been finalized. Puchault said that France 2 had invested the maximum amount it can, at more than €1 million. “Between France 2, Planète+ [for the second run window] and the CNC grant, and with our partner Galatée’s investments, we have managed to raise roughly 65% of the budget in France,” Fougea explains, “and we also have RTBF in Belgium on board.”

Negotiations are also under way with CCTV9, who Fougea says originally agreed to bring 15% of the budget in cash, as well as Munich-based



post-production room as well. At Sunny Side, the company showcased images which almost looked the same as daylight shots, except for the stars in the sky, which left some feeling a bit disappointed that the shots were not more spectacular.

“We were very proud about the fact the night shots were as clear as day shots, but I agree we need to find visual codes in post-production to differentiate further between day and night, especially as the entire 90 minutes will not all take place at night,” Fougea explains.

Machado adds that “everything has to be invented, there is no reference point... [but] we have great shots, such as elephants walking with city lights in the background.”

All in all, the documentary will consist of 22 weeks of shooting. The €2.4 million budget is “three or four times that of a regular doc, the technology raising the cost, including in post-production” says Fougea.

**Producers say *A Night on Earth* will have a “poetic dimension” while exploring questions about animals’ nocturnal behavior.**

distributor Autentic for German-speaking rights, with NHK in Japan, and also with an as-yet-unnamed international distributor.

Fougea now plans to develop the concept into series about the nightlife of different wildlife in various continents. The next installment, the 2 x 52-minute *Night in China*, would be produced as part of the agreement with CCTV9, which requires that a sequel has to be shot there.

“We will be filming in the Himalayas, an area where very few [nighttime docs] have been made,” says Fougea. Other episodes might focus on the Arctic and on America. ●



**R**ealscreen West returned to Santa Monica in early June, with 1,072 delegates packing into the Loews Hotel for two days of discussion, networking, and with the annual Realscreen Awards, a celebration of the best in non-fiction and unscripted content.

Much thanks to Realscreen West 2014's advisory board for helping to steer the content for the conference, and a big thanks to the event's sponsors and, of course, those of you who attended. Realscreen West 2015 returns to the Fairmont Miramar from June 1-3, expanding to three action-packed days. We'll see you there...

(All photos by Rahoul Ghose)



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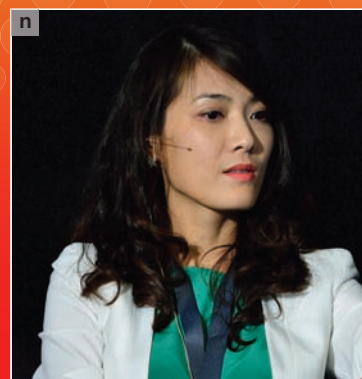


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**a** Realscreen Awards host Howie Mandel **b** A+E Networks president and CEO Nancy Dubuc at the Realscreen Awards **c** High Noon Entertainment's Brad Miller **d** Discovery Channel's Denise Contis **e** *What's Trending's* Shira Lazar **f** Schweet Entertainment's Jack Osbourne **g** Half Yard's Abby Greensfelder **h** CAA's Alan Braun **i** ICM's Lori York **j** Lifetime's Rob Sharenow and Bunim/Murray's Jon Murray **k** Bravo's Eli Lehrer **l** All3Media America's Eli Holzman (left) and Stephen Lambert (right)





**m** The Aqualillies dazzle at the Realscreen Awards **n** Star China International Media's Vivian Yin **o** *Behind the Mask* director Josh Greenbaum  
**p** Leftfield Entertainment's Brent Montgomery **q** Gurney Productions' Deirdre Gurney **r** *The Company*'s Charlie Ebersol **s** *Shine America*'s Monica Austin  
**t** National Geographic Channel's Alan Eyres **u** *Earth Touch USA*'s Phil Fairclough **v** *WE tv*'s Marc Juris **w** Nik Wallenda at the Realscreen Awards  
**x** Core Media Group's Jennifer O'Connell





It used to be the case that if a format flopped in the U.S., it would spell trouble for its chances internationally. But with more territories entering the formats market, producers are weighing their options. How important is it to break America first, and how do you do it?

**A young chef goes for the gold in *MasterChef Junior*.**

# American Dream

BY KEVIN RITCHIE

**F**or many producers, bringing a format to the United States is all about timing.

Although it is possible to score strong global sales without an American success story, the importance of retaining intellectual property rights and the plethora of digital platforms are upping the chances for formats to thrive internationally.

Still, the money U.S. networks are able to pour into a production makes the market a strategically important one. If a show is a hit in America, buyers will notice.

"It's really difficult to launch a paper format in the United States," says Thom Beers, CEO of FremantleMedia North America (FMNA), which produces *American Idol*, *America's Got Talent* and *The X Factor*. "It's such a critical market that if you aren't successful right out the gate, you're going to have a miserable couple of months."

In the past year, Keshet International's interactive singing competition *Rising Star* and Talpa Media's social experiment *Utopia* were snapped up by American broadcasters – ABC and Fox, respectively – in straight-to-series deals, and aired in under a year.

Typically, a network likes to gauge a format's performance over time: how it rated, who watched it and the kind of buzz it generated. Test driving a format in a smaller market such as the Netherlands, Australia or Israel not only allows producers to work out potential flaws, but provides

leverage when negotiating intellectual property rights with rights-hungry U.S. broadcasters.

"If there is a trend now – coming off of a challenging year for international formats – it would be not to rush into production just because a format might have worked in one market," says Shine America CEO Rich Ross. "They [the networks] would like enough time to develop it appropriately for the local market. Not that I think less formats will be sold at MIPCOM, but I would not be surprised if formats come to air in a longer fashion than they have in the past year."

In September of 2013, Fox launched the U.S. version of Shine's *MasterChef Junior*, in which aspiring pre-teen cooks compete for a US\$100,000 prize. Fox saw great success in bringing the Shine format *MasterChef* to the U.S., undoubtedly aided by having celeb chef Gordon Ramsay star, who is also a judge on *Junior*.

The original version of *Junior* aired for five years in the 1990s and was revamped by Shine and the BBC in 2010 – the same year the American version of *MasterChef* debuted on Fox. Shine shot four seasons before Fox okayed *Junior*, which averaged 5.1 million total viewers and ranked top in its time slot across key demos during its first season. In April, the series was renewed for a third season, ahead of the season two premiere.

But numbers need context. Ross says networks are becoming savvier when it comes to gauging

a format's ratings. A huge ratings increase for the time slot is meaningless if the slot was low-rated to begin with. Buyers want to know what shows it went up against and how it rated in comparison.

"The network wants a great show [that works] for them. It doesn't matter if it works in Sweden or Afghanistan," says Ross.

This fall, all eyes in the unscripted world have been on Fox with the debut of the latest format from *Big Brother* creator John De Mol's Talpa Media. *Utopia* places 15 cast members in a remote location and asks them to create their own rules, farm their own food and develop their own laws.

Part soap opera, part social experiment, *Utopia* was on the air in the Netherlands for less than two weeks when newly installed Fox reality chief Simon Andrae flew to Amsterdam and persuaded De Mol to do a deal prior to a planned U.S. pitch tour.

With a significant budget, 126 cameras and 288 hours of footage generated per day, a lot is at stake for both Fox and Talpa. A failure in the U.S. could impact *Utopia*'s international sales strategy, but producers believe the U.S. version will be less of a blueprint for buyers than the American *Big Brother* was, for example.

"The U.S. market is very rich in terms of characters, personalities and contradictions," says Maarten Meijis, managing director for Talpa Global. "I think the Dutch market and a few others

are less diverse in a way. Guns, for example, aren't allowed in Holland, so that's not even a point of discussion, but it could be in the U.S. market."

The Fox premiere, up against *Big Brother* on CBS, brought in 4.6 million viewers, according to Nielsen. As of press time, its Tuesday night airings brought a ratings drop from the premiere, but its September 16 episode was up 11% in the 18-49 demo. Fox is airing *Utopia* twice weekly.

Last year, Israeli broadcaster Keshet sought to reinvigorate the shiny floor competition genre by putting an interactive spin on the live singing contest. *Rising Star*, which premiered in late August, added unpredictability to the mix by having viewers choose the winners via a downloadable app. The series averaged 1.12 million viewers during its first season run and inspired a sales frenzy at MIPCOM.

Before the fourth episode aired in Israel, distributor Keshet International began announcing straight-to-series deals. The format landed in more than 25 territories, including the United States, where ratings for *The Voice* and *American Idol* have dipped and *The X Factor* has been canceled by Fox.

Would *Rising Star*'s interactivity excite American audiences? The show premiered on ABC on June 22, attracting 5.2 million total viewers on highly competitive Sunday night. Since then, ratings dropped to 3.14 million by the finale on August 24, according to Nielsen.

Meanwhile, in September, ITV in the UK announced it was axing its planned adaptation of the format, which was set to debut in early 2015.

While citing the innovation of the format in its statement, the company added: "As a commercial broadcaster, we always need to be as confident as possible about the potential ratings of any new program format that we have acquired."

The U.S. market is particularly important for Keshet International. Earlier this year, the company created Keshet DCP, a joint venture with Dick Clark Productions, to produce unscripted formats, with a focus on primetime entertainment for the big four nets. But execs insist that an American flop would not devastate *Rising Star*'s international roll-out.

"From our experience, the U.S. flop or success is becoming less of a factor with international buyers," maintains Keshet International's distribution and acquisitions head Keren Shahar. "They are looking at the U.S. but the world is becoming more flat."

Over the past few years, format producers in Europe have noticed growing interest from buyers elsewhere in the world as more markets get into the game.

By 2013, the UK and U.S. were the top two producers of formats, according to internal research presented by FremantleMedia's senior VP of global acquisitions and development, Vasha Wallace, during Realscreen West in June. Out of 102 formats adapted globally, 24 formats originating in those respective markets were adapted internationally.

In 2013, the TV Formats in Europe Report, which studied 84 European channels across the 16 territories and 21 distributors, found the value created by the top 100 formats was US\$2.9 billion – down 3.3% from 2012, but up from the year prior. The number of hours broadcast was 28,386 in 2013, nearly the same as 2012.

**"The network wants a great show for them. It doesn't matter if it works in Sweden or Afghanistan."**

"There's a much bigger appetite for formats coming from anywhere outside the U.S.," says Patty Geneste, CEO of Dutch producer Absolutely Independent and chair of industry body, the Format Recognition and Protection Association (FRAPA). "It's much stronger now because of the

bigger importance of IP rights."

Launching a format in the U.S. is a risk, which is why networks ask for rights. To hang onto those rights, producers will develop and produce a show in a foreign market and then take it to the U.S.

Since Nordic World, the commercial arm of TV2 in Norway and

TV4 Sweden, bought Absolutely Independent in January, Geneste has focused on attracting indie U.S. producers interested in getting greenlit by a Scandinavian network before chasing a format deal in their home territory.

Still, even if a producer test-drives a format internationally and works out all the kinks, U.S. execs will likely make creative tweaks, which can sometimes impact the essence of a format.

In 2008, FremantleMedia North America developed the reality dating show format *Take Me Out* but took it overseas, where it debuted on Australia's Network Ten (as *Taken Out*) before landing 12 format deals including one with ITV in the UK.

Fox picked it up in the U.S. and aired it in 2012. It flopped.

"Here's the downside," says FremantleMedia's Thom Beers. "You still have to get through that creative process. If they [the network] want to change a show that drastically, so that it no longer resembles the show you made elsewhere, your chance of success and survival goes down."

Still, despite the trends, tricks of timing and ups and downs, the U.S. is such a colossal market that producers cannot avoid it.

"If you sell into the U.S. and do the same deal in Hungary, of course we put the same amount of energy into it because we respect every deal, but the numbers are very different," says Geneste.

**Talpa's *Utopia*, a hit in the Netherlands, got off to a rocky start in the U.S.**





## FORMAT FOCUS

Classic formats are enjoying a resurgence on broadcast schedules across the globe through revamped, modernized versions. But there's more to revitalizing a format than meets the eye.

BY MANORI RAVINDRAN



# Déjà view

**T**wenty years ago, the first sale of Andrea Jackson's career in television distribution was the British game show *Catchphrase* – a popular show that ran from 1986 until 2004, in which contestants use animated clues to identify familiar catchphrases.

Recently, the managing director of acquisitions and formats for distributor DRG found herself selling the program again. But this time around, the format had been updated for ITV with a brand new set, host and 3D technology which, in her opinion, finally let *Catchphrase* realize its full potential.

"On the screen, well-known catchphrases you're saying are brought to life through 3D animation, so the technology that's available now is much more advanced and clever than anything that was around the first time," says Jackson. "The format genuinely looks much more contemporary – the 21st-century version."

*Catchphrase* is part of a recent swell of revived classic formats finding new life by catering to younger audiences experiencing the shows for the first time as well as older viewers nostalgic for cherished programs.

Ranging from game shows such as *Whose Line Is It Anyway?* to the docuseries *Living*

*with the Enemy*, what's old is new again, and enjoying thoroughly modern makeovers.

Jackson – who also sells the classic formats *15 to 1* and *This is Your Life* – says the key to a successful revival is ensuring that you are bringing back a format that is known to global audiences, but that has also been off-air for a reasonable period of time.

"Good television needs to be rested so that when you bring it back, you've got the value of the brand recognition," she explains. "It's a title which the audience has a lot of nostalgia for and looks back affectionately on – remembering watching it when they were younger – but enough time has elapsed so that when it does come back on-screen it feels new and exciting nonetheless."

The exec notes that compelling formats tend to work in cycles, running their course in one territory but then emerging in another region where the shows are embraced by a new audience.

One such format is *To Tell the Truth*, an American game show that challenges celebrity panelists to guess who among three people claiming to be the same person is telling the truth. The show was created in the U.S. in 1956 and aired for more than two decades with a handful of international versions over the years.

**The new version of British game show *Catchphrase*, which originally debuted in 1986.**

In Germany, however, a local version has been airing since 2004, and this past July, FremantleMedia began developing a U.S. revival of the game show with former NBC chairman Jeff Gaspin.

"What's most important is that when the format works, you stick with it," says Vasha Wallace, senior VP of global acquisition and development for FremantleMedia.

Wallace says the company is faithful to the original formats, but adding contemporary designs and personalities is essential to the revival process.

"The way you produce it will modernize a format," she adds. "You have a modern set, you have modern contestants, and often you have a host who feels contemporary... and if you were to tell a 16-year-old watching it that the show's been on for 30 years, they'd say, 'Well, this feels like a very modern show.'"

Ultimately, the high-stakes nature of the present reality climate doesn't allow broadcasters to rest on the laurels of past success. Sebastian Burkhardt, head of sales for distributor Banijay International, says that for any format being revisited, it's imperative



SBS in Australia has revived the docuformat *Living with the Enemy*, which originally ran on BBC2 in 1999.

that the new version becomes a local success.

"At the end of the day, what matters is not how it performed in the past, but how it is performing today, if it's re-launched. That's the benchmark right now," says Burkhardt.

Italian free-to-air broadcaster Canale 5 recently ordered a local version of Banijay Group's reality format *Temptation Island*, which originally aired in the U.S. in 2001. "Obviously we have a history with the format, but we have to consider re-launching something like this as the starting point, going back to 0.0 again," says Burkhardt. "That's why even reviving a format is like launching a new format:

it must be a strong local success to show that this format is something that can work globally and work for a lot of broadcasters in a lot of different markets."

But the return of older shows also points to a risk-averse reality market in which broadcasters are choosing to bring back proven classics rather than take chances with new, original formats. If something has worked before, after all, why shouldn't it work again?

"Times are tough and there is definitely a risk factor," says Sarah Tong, director of sales for distributor Hat Trick International. "[Broadcasters] have advertisers to keep happy and they need to do whatever they can to make sure the shows they bring in are going to be successful. And if that's a brand or well-known commodity, it must feel like less of a risk."

Tong gives the example of Hat Trick format *Whose Line Is It Anyway?*, which aired in the U.S. from 1998 to 2007, and was revived in 2013 by American broadcaster The CW. "If you're looking for a comedic format and you want something that's half an hour and funny, that uses new talent and maybe

improvisation, you think, 'Well, there's a really good format out there.' It may have been around for 20-odd years but that doesn't mean it's still not brilliant," offers Tong.

Another reason for the spate of classic comebacks is the high cost of producing new formats. The mechanics of developing a new show – particularly a game show – are complicated and expensive. "It takes a lot of research and a lot of money to fund pilots," says Alexia Laroche-Joubert, managing director of Banijay Productions France, which is currently coproducing a version of *The Weakest Link* for the French digital channel D8.

"By re-launching these brands, the channels can make sure they have a

strong mechanic [that works] as well as an established reputation," adds the exec. "Therefore, it's rarer to see new game shows on air."

Even more challenging to produce are revivals of documentary formats. While game shows can be adapted virtually any time, docuseries are more specific in their recipes for success, as John Godfrey – head of documentaries for Australian broadcaster SBS – found out when commissioning a local six-part revival of the 1999 BBC2 docuseries *Living with the Enemy*, which sees strangers live with those whose beliefs contradict their own.

"Constructed documentary formats like *Living with the Enemy* rely on the right social issues being in the news at the time, and to have an appetite with audiences that is constantly in flux," says Godfrey. "Game and quiz formats are commissioned for long runs for a reason – they don't rely on topics being hot-button at the time, and have a longevity that documentary formats simply don't have."

But just as game shows – despite their staying power – have to be updated, so too must docuseries. While the original *Living with the Enemy* was only half an hour and focused on challenging one person's perspective over five days, the latest series tackles the opposing views of two people living together for 10 days.

Ultimately, in a broadcaster's search for programming that will stop the wary channel surfer dead in their tracks, nothing does the trick like a beloved vintage program, and audiences ought to expect more déjà vu in their future. In a market with little room for failure, reliable classics – made over for modern times – aren't going anywhere, any time soon.

"It's like a recipe for a cake that you absolutely know works," says FremantleMedia's Wallace. "You can add a little bit more spice if you want to, but you know that if you put in those eggs and that flour and whisk it in a certain way and cook it at a certain temperature, it will rise and it will work for you." •



# Life in the fast lane

In a world of 24/7 news cycles and citizen journalists documenting historic events online as they unfold, the fast-turnaround documentary is gaining more importance on network schedules internationally. Here, Pioneer Productions managing director Kirstie McLure details the ingredients needed to turn quality around quickly, while asking an important question – how fast is too fast?

Over the last decade, the hunger for immediacy has dominated our everyday viewing. We now live in a world where we can increasingly choose to watch content on-demand, on a variety of platforms, 24/7. Inevitably, this change in viewer habits has seen the decline of certain genres, but coming out on top of the survivors' podium is the fast-turnaround documentary – it's a perfect fit for today's audience, blessed with much choice and little patience.

I clearly recall the SARS outbreak of 2002 for being more than just a little-known deadly virus that was spreading with haste: my stronger memory is of our promise to Channel 4 to make a scientifically accurate documentary, ready-to-air in just 20 days.

A shot of adrenaline hit Pioneer Towers that day. Staff were deployed to remote China and beyond, and multiple edit suites were opened. The 50-minute film, *SARS: Killer Bug*, was duly delivered on time, to length and – miraculously – without the use of any black holes, in under three weeks.

The award-winning film made in those 20 hectic days created the blueprint we largely still follow today. It's a demanding discipline that requires all involved to put their lives entirely on hold for two weeks (three, if you include the essential recovery week). The production timeframe has been shaved to 14 or even 12 days; any less puts you firmly in the danger zone.

The exception to this rule is a UK fast-turnaround program based on news footage and interviews, which can be done in a week. The increasing number of channels now commissioning in-depth, fast-turnaround documentaries risks creating an unhealthy 'race to air.' This over-promising

of how fast it can be done – some are promising delivery in five days – is certain to affect the quality of these shows, and undoubtedly at some point results in a failure to deliver.

We usually deliver fast-turnaround docs the morning of transmission, but the jury is still out as to whether the first show to air wins substantially more viewers than those that appear a few days later. However, we have noticed that the audience appetite significantly wanes if the docs transmission three or four weeks later than this.

The team is the key to success on a fast-turnaround film and the most critical member of all is the lead producer – a producer with a strong journalistic background coupled with nerves of steel and a strong constitution is essential. Our executive producer, Bob Strange, has landed many of these shows safely and skillfully, and maintains that his first response is always the same: "Book a helicopter... right now." This, he declares, is not an over-enthusiastic attempt to spend every penny of the editorial budget, but is a philosophy driven from experience: "With a helicopter and an articulate scientist on board, we have an immediate structural backbone – or at least one good sequence – around which an exciting and informative program can be built," he says.

Bob also maintains that whatever the subject of the show, there is no substitute for 'boots on the ground' research to find the critical human interest stories which fascinate viewers and bring an event to life.

A decade since SARS and more than 20 fast turnarounds later, the fabric of Pioneer has subtly altered. The possibility of scrambling a production team to a disaster zone is never more than a news item away. Thus, there is always a palpable sense of anticipation in the corridors that shows no signs of leaving the building in the near future. And while we don't wish for natural disasters, we know they will come. •



McLure



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BY BARRY WALSH

# IDEAS MAN



**P**arking somewhere along the intersection of science, technology and history, you'll find *How We Got to Now*, a six-part miniseries from Nutopia for PBS and the BBC that examines how the wild and weird fascinations that inspired historical mavericks and amateur inventors have shaped our world. The choice of presenter for the series is also inspired: Steven Johnson, best-selling author (*Where Good Ideas Come From*, *Everything Bad is Good for You*) and media theorist.

Distributed internationally by BBC Worldwide, the series breaks down the ideas that forged history into six themes – Cold, Time, Light, Clean, Glass and Sound – while largely eschewing such pillars of educational content as archival footage or talking heads. Johnson, for his part, throws himself into his role with considerable vigor, whether it's by lowering himself into a San Francisco sewer, or skiing in a man-made winter landscape in the midst of the Dubai desert.

**You also wrote a companion book for this project while shooting the episodes. Do you ever sleep?**

The idea of writing the book while doing the show seems daunting to people when they hear it, but it was actually really nice, because I would write at night after shooting, which would be tiring, but I'd never have the blank page problem, because

we had all this great material from the scripts and stories which we worked on collaboratively. So I always knew what the "next thing" was.

**Was there any difficulty in making the transition from writing to presenting?**

Hitting the tone of storytelling and humor and all the stuff that was important to the show was something I'd already been working on for 10 years as a public speaker. The learning curve, which has been really fun, is not so much about performance but more about how to take these ideas and present them in a television format, figuring out how to tell these stories. You can have a great story about someone who invents something and their lives, but what really makes it interesting is the chain reaction that it sets off, which inspires something hundreds of years later.

**Unlike other series dealing with historical subject matter, you don't use a lot of archive, reenactment or talking heads here.**

While there are no historical reenactments, we do have a scene at the beginning of the "Cold" episode where we are telling the story of Frederic Tudor, who basically started the ice trade by taking chunks of frozen lakes from New England and shipping them off to Bombay or Cuba. His epiphany, as a well-to-do Bostonian, was in going to the American South and walking around

dressed up in his fancy gear, and thinking, "It's incredibly hot down here!" So we have a scene where I'm in full 19th century regalia being carted around by horse and carriage. So even when we go in that direction, it's a little more playful.

**It seems it was a little easier to be an amateur scientist in those days. Is it harder to be a maverick today?**

One of the things that defines a lot of the people in this show, that makes them mavericks, is that they don't fit within existing categories very neatly, and through the merging of all these different fields of interest, something interesting happens. That's the area where it's trickier now, because we've built up these fiefdoms of expertise. The reason why there were so many "gentlemen scientists" in the 18th century is we only had the scientific method for a century or two, so there was a lot to discover. You could be Benjamin Franklin and have your home lab. Now you have to spend years at grad schools to reach the kinds of pinnacles where you can make new discoveries. That's working against the mavericks, in a way. •



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